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LOVE-FEASTS

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LOVE-FEASTS

A History of the Christian Agape

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PREFACE

THE literature concerning the history of the Agape available for an ordinary reader is not very extensive. In England, apart from the work of two or three students of the subject, it has not received much attention. Excellent Bibliographies may be found in the articles contained in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* and (for the older literature) in M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia.* The following is a short list of the more important books and papers on the subject:

BATIFFOL: *Études d'histoire et de Théologie positive* (Paris, 1902). In which the author replies to the work of Dr. Keating.

BOX: *The Jewish Antecedents of the Eucharist* (*Journal of Theological Studies*, iii. 357).

DRESCHER: *De vett. Christ. Agapis* (Giess, 1824).

ERMONI: *L'Agape dans l'Église primitive* (Paris, 1906). A reply to the work of Batiffol.

FUNK: 'L'Agape' in the Louvain *Revue d'histoire ecclesiastique* (January 15, 1903).

HARNACK : ' Brot und Wasser ' (*Texte und Unters.*, vii. 2) (Leipzig, 1891)

JÜLICHER : *Zur Geschichte des Abendmahls* (1892).

KEATING : *The Agape and the Eucharist* (London 1901). The most valuable study of the Love-feast in English.

LOCK : Article ' Love-feasts ' in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

LECLERCQ : Article on ' Agape ' in Cabrol's *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie* A most interesting description of the Agape as regards its representation in early Christian art and inscriptions. Well illustrated.

MACLEAN : Article ' Agape ' in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.* An able summary in a few pages of the whole history.

KESTNER : *Die Agape* (Jena, 1819).

RAMSAY : *The Church in the Roman Empire.*

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	11
I.	PAGAN PARALLELS OF THE AGAPE	17
II.	JEWISH PARALLELS	35
III.	THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD	44
IV.	THE ORIGIN AND NAME OF THE AGAPE	59
V.	THE AGAPE IN ASIA IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES	67
VI.	THE AGAPE IN EUROPE IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES	82
VII.	THE AGAPE IN AFRICA IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES	93
VIII.	THE AGAPE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY AND AFTER: EASTERN CHRISTENDOM	112
IX.	THE AGAPE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY AND AFTER: WESTERN CHRISTENDOM	132
X.	THE AGAPE AND IMPERIAL POLICY	147
XI.	THE AGAPE IN THE CATACOMBS	165
XII.	FUNERAL AND COMMEMORATIVE AGAPAE	180
XIII.	THE AGAPE IN THE CHURCH ORDERS	195
XIV.	AGAPE RITES AND USAGES	213
XV.	AGAPE RITES AND USAGES (*continued*)	235
XVI.	THE DOWNFALL OF THE AGAPE	246
XVII.	MODERN SURVIVALS OF THE AGAPE	257
XVIII.	MODERN READOPTIONS OF THE AGAPE	268
	INDEX	285

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

C.I.G.	Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.
C.I.L.	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.
D.B.	Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*
D.C.G.	Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.*
E.B.	Encyclopaedia Britannica.
E.G.T.	Expositor's Greek Testament.
E.R.E.	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
I.C.C.	International Critical Commentary.
L. and S.	Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon.*
Or.	Orelli.

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH the Agape had an apostolic origin, it arose, not as the Eucharist did, out of a divine ordinance, but from the spirit of brotherly unity and friendly intercourse that marked the early Christian assemblies. Over all the Mediterranean world, in which Christianity had its origin, men and women were accustomed, long before the Christian Church began, to gather together on occasions for common meals. The nexus of these fellowships in the Roman Empire was generally trade interest, though bereavement and the memory of the dead also summoned them together. Such assemblies had often a religious character, according to the times and places. Specially was this true as regards the gatherings of Jews and Eastern cults. It was only natural, therefore, that the early Christians should meet as their neighbours everywhere did. They had even more reason to do so: their bond of union was

not the pursuit of trade, but the New Experience which had come to them through Jesus Christ, and the newer Charity towards each other that the Experience had induced.

For nearly three centuries the Agape continued to be a familiar part of Christian worship in every locality in which Christianity has left us early records ; but towards the end of that period so many abuses had grown up around it that it gradually became obliterated. Church Councils and religious leaders raised their voices against it, and it was banished almost completely from Christendom. Not altogether, however, for in out-of-the-way districts, and in churches in imperfect communion with the main bodies of Christianity, the Agape persisted for several centuries further, and in some few cases has persisted to this present day. Even where the Agape itself is forgotten, certain interesting souvenirs of the ancient use are still to be found occasionally in the older churches. Further, there are a few instances where churches in modern times have readopted the Agape, as being at once a valuable and an apostolic institution.

As we read the accounts of the Love-feasts of the primitive Church, we sometimes regret that the Agape has lost its place in the Christian worship of modern times. The spirit of common brotherhood which produced it, and of which it was so cogent a

testimony, would surely be serviceable to-day. In spite of its decay it was not undeserving of the eulogy pronounced on it by St Chrysostom: 'A custom most beautiful and most beneficial; for it was a supporter of love, a solace of poverty, and a discipline of humility.'[1]

There are several difficult questions involved in the history of the Agape, and with regard to its origin there are many diverging theories.

The older view of Church History was that from the first the Christians celebrated the Eucharist and also a common meal, to which some liturgical importance was attached, and which was called from at least the latter half of the first century the Agape; that at the end of the second century the Agape had been separated from the Eucharist in the large majority of Churches.

Within recent years the matter has received considerable attention in France. In 1902 a new theory of the Agape was set forth by Mgr. Batiffol, a learned Roman Catholic, and his book has been replied to by M. V. Ermoni (Paris, 1906). Batiffol's theory is that the Agape did not exist till the third century as a church assembly. He grants that there were common meals in the primitive Church; but holds that, except by way of abuse, they were never connected with the Eucharist in apostolic and

[1] Homily on 1 Cor. xi.

sub-apostolic times. He adds that when one meets the name 'Agape' as applied to a church ordinance it refers to the Eucharist. Another part of his theory is that the Agape in the third and fourth centuries began as a mere charity supper, but eventually became a public organization. The facts are altogether against this theory of Batiffol's, and the reply to it formulated by Ermoni was so effective that the theory seems to have been quite overthrown.

A third view, which is purely conjectural, has been enunciated in Germany by Jülicher and Spitta. It makes the Agape the original institution, and suggests that the Eucharist arose out of it, but that there was very little difference between them.[1]

The older view undoubtedly still holds the field, although in several particulars it needs modification. As thus altered it may be called Lightfoot's view. His statement of the case was, in effect, that the early Christians, following pagan patterns and Jewish usages, were wont to gather together for common meals. On such occasions it was customary to administer the Holy Communion,

[1] This theory has been resuscitated recently in a Quaker form by Mr. John W. Graham, Principal of Dalton Hall (*Hibbert Journal*, October, 1915, 'The War: A Quaker Apologia,' p. 133). He says, 'The third century was the time when the Church changed its love-feasts into copies of the great mysteries of the Greeks and Asiatics with their sacramental efficacy.'

partly by reason of the convenience of the arrangement, and partly because it was remembered that the Lord's institution of the Eucharist took place at the close of an ordinary meal. Of course, this usage was far from being universal, but it was very widespread. At first the Agape was an ordinary meal. Later it became a sort of charity supper, provided by the rich for the poor. As it grew in years it also grew in complexity of ritual.

The occasions of such festivals also varied. At first, when persecution was frequent, it was a great comfort to a body of Christians in such a city as Rome to be able to have frequently an evening meal in a secret place where it was possible for them to avoid idol-meat and other abhorred things without awakening the resentment of heathen neighbours. As persecution ceased, the necessity for such privacy was not so great. In the meantime other opportunities had arisen for social intercourse among Christians. Funeral feasts and commemorative banquets were common among the pagans. Therefore on the commemorative days of martyrs rich Christians frequently gave banquets to their poor brethren. Whether it is correct to look on these as ordinary Agapae is a matter for determination.

An important question will arise as to the union of the Agape and the Eucharist. Which of them came first? The New Testament evidence,

with the exception of one doubtful passage (Acts xx. 11), points towards the Agape preceding the Eucharist. But St. Chrysostom says that the opposite order had always held. So also is the order given in the *Canons* of Hippolytus. At least one modern writer on the subject (Dr. Lock, Hastings' *D.B.*, 'Love-feasts') holds the same view. On the whole evidence, however, the former view is more likely to be correct, viz. that the Agape came first, and was followed by the Eucharist; or, to put it more accurately, the common meal normally culminated in the Eucharist, when spiritual influence and the inspiration of personal communion with one another had brought the celebrants into the true harmony of fellowship with their Lord.

There is no doubt, unfortunately, regarding the series of abuses which accompanied the decadence of the Love-feast. A cloud of witnesses testify to them from every district of early Christendom; and when we come to the multitudinous literature of the fourth and fifth centuries, there is scarcely a writer who has a good word to say on behalf of the Agape.

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I

PAGAN PARALLELS OF THE AGAPE

THERE was scarcely a portion of the great Mediterranean world in ancient days in which clubs, associations, guilds, and brotherhoods were not frequent. In the majority of cases these guilds were accustomed to meet at stated periods for a common meal. As charity is now understood they were not charitable societies, but rather insurance clubs and trades unions. Among the Romans they had become marked features of ordinary life, but they were also common in the Greek States.

As early as the days of Demosthenes clubs with a common meal were well known. Some were called ἐράνοι, and their members were known as ἐρανισταί.[1] The president, who was a man of considerable importance, was called ἀρχερανιστής.[2] These clubs

[1] See these words in L. and S. See *Corpus Inscrip.* 126, &c.
[2] *Corpus Inscrip.* 2525b.

were sometimes very wealthy, and owned a considerable amount of property. Usually they assumed a political character, and possessed great influence in the Greek democracies. There is an interesting similarity between them and the Agape so far as names are concerned, in view of the fact that both have a name, which, like the φιδίτια (to be mentioned in a moment), implies 'Love.'[1]

Demosthenes also mentions some other brotherhoods which had a common meal; there were for instance the θιάσοι, which seem to have earned for themselves an unenviable notoriety for debauchery.[2]

In Athens there were many such associations under the name of ἑταιρείαι, and these had been in existence for some centuries. At Crete the clubs with common meals were known as συσσίτια and ἀνδρεῖαι. At Sparta there was an arrangement by which the citizens generally ate at public tables. These were known as φιδίτια or φιλίτια, a name which includes in it the idea of 'Love' (φιλία). Pliny, in his *Letters* (Ep. x.), says that there were nineteen such brotherhoods in the island of Rhodes alone.

On the whole these Greek brotherhoods seem to have been worthy and prosperous associations.

[1] The derivation of ἐράνοι is probably from ἐράω, to love.

[2] References to θιάσοι may be found in Reiske's edition of *The Attic Orators: Demosthenes*, vol. iii., p. 276. Cf. also Euripides, *Bacchae*, 115–680.

Plato, indeed, advocated them in his *Republic*. The common meal was a usual feature of their meetings. They had also a body of officers whose name, κληρωτοί, was in early times adopted by the Christian Church. As to the moral value of these associations, Dr. Keating's estimate seems to be according to the evidence : ' While the State religion of Greece showed a certain approximation to refinement and morality, the vulgar were attracted by the looseness and the disorderly rites connected with the θιάσοι; and the effect of these associations, and the cults they represented, could hardly be characterized as morally progressive.'[1]

There are three main similarities, therefore, between the Greek Guilds and the Christian Agapae. They bear similar titles, in which the meal is practically called a Love-feast. They have some titles—at least one—of officials in common, and, like the Agape, they tended to encourage abuses.[2] The very problem that St. Paul found in the Agape at Corinth Socrates had found three centuries before on neighbouring soil. This is how Xenophon describes the matter (*Memorabilia*, Book iii.) : ' Whenever some of those who came together for supper brought a small portion of food, and others brought much, Socrates

[1] Keating, p. 9.

[2] Foucart, *Des Associations religieuses chez les Grecs*, p. 153 ff., has collected the evidence that the eating at these confraternities was usually frugal, but the drinking was excessive.

used to bid the attendant boy to put the small portion before the whole company, or to divide a part to each. They then who brought much could not for shame refuse to partake of that which was set before them, and, in return, to put their own food before the whole company; and since they had nothing more (to eat) than they who brought little, they ceased bringing much food.' We must conclude from this passage and the similar words in 1 Cor. xi. 22 that it was a customary thing in the common meals in Greek localities to bring one's own food to the gathering, and that the custom was liable to considerable misuse.

When we turn to Roman history and custom, we find a series of institutions in existence called Collegia and Sodalicia, which played a considerable part in the shaping of the form of the church life of the first three centuries in Rome. These guilds or associations played a very large part in common life during the Empire period. In the literary history that has come down to us they take a comparatively small place, but in the inscriptions of the period they have frequent mention. Hatch[1] gives epigraphical authorities for an interesting list of guilds, showing that they existed amongst almost every kind of workmen, and in almost every town of the Empire of which inscriptions remain. They existed,

[1] Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, pp. 26–28

for instance, among the raftsmen at Geneva, among the wool-carders at Ephesus, among the litter-bearers of a remote colony of Wallachia, and among the shoemakers of a market-town in Spain. There were also dramatic guilds, athletic clubs, burial clubs, friendly societies, literary societies, and financial societies. The slaves on an estate or in a household formed a trades union; and even the thieves had a Collegium of their own if Apuleius (*Metam.* vii. 137) is to be taken seriously. It is probable, however, that he is in his usual vein of wittiness, just as Horace probably was when he wrote of the Collegia of the Jewish prostitutes (*ambubaiarum*) (*Serm.* i. 2. 1).

If in these days we sometimes feel that modern Trades Unionism is capturing our industrial life with its organizations, it may be of some interest to reflect that its prototype in ancient Rome was even more extended in its ramifications. In fact, the passion of the Romans for association was quite remarkable, and a writer on their industrial history would find that their progress in trade was largely influenced by their Collegia.

Roman history, as is generally known, was delightfully systematic in assigning the foundation of one set of institutions to one king, and of another group to another king. Romulus, for instance, is the war-king, and concerns himself with the military

and political institutions. Numa, the second king of Rome, is a man of peace, and is occupied throughout his reign with the social and religious organization of his people. It is Numa,[1] therefore, who is credited with having established guilds of carpenters, dyers, shoemakers, tanners, workers in copper and gold, flute-players, and potters.[2]

We would not be correct, however, in viewing this movement towards the increase of guilds as altogether similar to modern Trades Unionism. They made practically no attempt to raise wages, to improve working conditions, to limit the number of apprentices, to develop skill and artistic taste in the craft, or to better the social or political position of the labourer. Workers were drawn together rather by the need which they felt for companionship, sympathy, and help in the emergencies of life, and by the innate desire of men for a fuller scope for realization of personality than is afforded in a daily occupation.

These motives explain the provisions made for social gatherings, and for the burial of members,

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Numa*, chapter xvii.

[2] See *The Common People of Ancient Rome*, by Professor F. F. Abbott, of Princeton, U.S.A., pp. 215–217. Full information on the subject of these workmen's guilds among the Romans is to be found in Waltzing's *Étude historique sur les Corporations professionelles chez les Romains*, three vols., Louvain, 1899. This writer also gives a good bibliography of other works (i., pp. 17–30).

which were characteristic features of most of the organizations. It is the social side, for instance, which is indicated on a tombstone found in a little town of Central Italy. After giving the name of the deceased, it reads: 'He bequeathed to his guild, the rag-dealers, a thousand sesterces, from the income of which each year, on the festival of the Parentalia, not less than twelve men shall dine at his tomb.'[1] Another in Northern Italy reads:

'To Publius Etereius Quadratus, the son of Publius, of the Tribus Quirina, Etereia Aristolais, his mother, has set up a statue, at whose dedication she gave the customary banquet to the union of rag-dealers, and also a sum of money, from the income of which annually, from this time forth, on the birthday of Quadratus, April 9, where his remains have been laid, they should make a sacrifice, and should hold the customary banquet in the temple, and should bring roses in their season and cover and crown the statue: which thing they have undertaken to do.'[2]

The menu of one of these dinners given in Dacia[3] has come down to us. It includes lamb and pork, bread, salad, onions, and two kinds of wine. The cost of the entertainment amounted to one hundred and sixty-nine denarii, or about £5 10s., a sum

[1] *Corpus Inscrip.* xi. 5047. [2] Ibid., v. 7906. [3] Ibid., iii. 953.

which would probably have a purchasing value to-day of from three to four times that amount.

The 'temple' or chapel referred to in these inscriptions was usually semi-circular, and may have served as a model for the Christian oratories. The building usually stood in a little grove, and, with its accommodations for official meetings and dinners, served the same purpose as a modern club-house. Besides the special gatherings for which some deceased member or some rich patron provided, the guild met at fixed times during the year to dine, or for other social purposes. The income of the society, which was made up of the initiation fees and monthly dues of the members, and of donations, was supplemented now and then by a system of fines. At least in an African inscription we read :

'In the Curia of Jove. Done November 27, in the consulship of Maternus and Atticus. . . . If any one shall wish to be a flamen, he shall give three amphorae of wine, besides bread and salt and provisions. If any one shall wish to be a magister, he shall give two amphorae of wine. . . . If any one shall have spoken disrespectfully to a flamen, or laid hands upon him, he shall pay two denarii. . . . If any one shall have gone to fetch wine, and shall have made away with it, he shall give double the amount.'[1]

[1] *Corpus Inscrip.* viii. 14683.

It is plain that the Roman Collegia were never merely charitable. Indeed, it is very doubtful if there was such a thing as a charitable society of any kind in Rome in the centuries B.C. They were generally insurance corporations on a small scale. Such a guild was, for instance, that of the worshippers of Diana and Antinous (*Cultores Dianae et Antinoi*), with the statutes of which we are familiar through an inscription of the year 136.[1] Its members were mostly poor, being generally freedmen and slaves. Each member paid an entrance fee of 100 HS. (18*s*.) and a monthly subscription of 5 asses (about 20 pence). On the death of a member funeral benefit was granted to the extent of 300 HS. (54*s*.), of which sum 50 HS. (about 9*s*.) were distributed among those members of the guild who were present at the burial. If the deceased had no relatives, the guild undertook the funeral arrangements.

An interesting military guild is also described by Uhlhorn. In the Legio III. Aug. there was a Schola of thirty-six persons. The candidate for membership paid, on admission, 750 den. (£25), and also gave a current subscription. In return he received from the common chest, in the event of his requiring to travel over the sea, a contribution towards his travelling expenses of 200 den. (£7); if he were a horseman, he received 500 den. (£15), and if necessary

[1] *Or.* 6086, quoted by Uhlhorn.

an extra contribution of 500 den. towards the expenses of outfit. Finally, on his death the costs of his burial were defrayed. If he was honourably discharged as a veteran, he received on his departure 6,000 HS. (£52).

In the course of time many of these guilds became very wealthy. The basis of their subscriptions and payments was so arranged as to ensure a considerable margin for safety and profit. Further, we find mention from time to time of large sums of money being given to them as legacies by men who desired their names to be honoured and remembered, and who wished their tombs to be constantly supplied with flowers, chaplets, lamps, &c. One man (see *Or.* 3999) bequeathed 100,000 HS. (£870) on the condition that there might be provided at his grave each year a banquet for at least twelve persons. This legacy and the duty of seeing to the testator's wishes were confided to the guild of the 'Centenarii.'[1]

The provision which burial societies made for their members is illustrated by the following epitaph:

'To the shade of Gaius Julius Filetus, born in Africa, a physician, who lived thirty-five years. Gaius Julius Filetus and Julias Euthenia, his

[1] See *Corpus Inscrip.* vii. 2557.

parents, have erected it to their very dear son. Also to Julius Athenodorus, his brother, who lived thirty-five years. Euthenia set it up. He has been placed, to whose burial the guild of rag-dealers has contributed three hundred denarii.'[1]

People of all ages have craved a respectable burial, and the pathetic picture which Horace gives us in one of his satires of the fate which befell the poor and friendless at the end of life may well have led men of the rag-dealing class to make provision which would protect them from such an experience; and it was not an unnatural thing for these organizations to be made up altogether of men working in the same unsavoury trade.

The statutes of several guilds have come down to us. One found at Lanuvium has articles dealing particularly with burial regulations. They read in part[2]:

'It has pleased the members that whoever shall wish to join this guild shall pay an initiation fee of one hundred sesterces, and an amphora of good wine, as well as five asses a month. Voted likewise, that if any man shall not have paid his dues for six consecutive months, and if the lot common to all men has befallen him, his claim to a burial shall not be considered, even if he shall have so

[1] Ibid., iii. 3583. [2] Ibid., xiv. 2112.

stipulated in his will. Voted likewise, that if any man from this body of ours, having paid his dues, shall depart, there shall come to him from the treasury three hundred sesterces, from which sum fifty sesterces, which shall be divided at the funeral pyre, shall go for the funeral rites. Furthermore, the obsequies shall be performed on foot.'

Besides the need of comradeship and the desire to provide for a respectable burial, we can see another motive which brought the weak and lowly together in these associations. Men in poor positions of life were oppressed by the sense of their own insignificance in society, and by the pitifully small part which they played in the affairs of the world. But if they could establish a society of their own, with concerns peculiar to itself which they would administer, and if they could create positions of honour and importance in this organization, even the lowest rag-picker or street hawker in Rome would have a chance to satisfy that craving to exercise power over others which all of us feel—to hold titles and distinctions, and to wear the insignia of office and rank. Indeed, as years went by it came to be the fact in Rome that a speedy way of reaching imperial or public offices was to have shown some brilliance as the occupant of a post in an important Collegium.

We have been noticing how the ancient differed

from the modern trades union in the objects which it sought to obtain. But the religious character which the ancient Collegium assumed seems to us at first sight to be a little strange. Guilds put themselves generally under the protection of some deity, and were associated with some religious cult. In general we find that trade guilds looked to Minerva as their patroness.[1] It was natural, too, that Sylvanus, the god of the woods, should be a favourite with the carpenters, Bacchus with the innkeepers, Vesta with the bakers, and Diana with those who hunted wild animals for the Circus. It was equally reasonable that the physicians of Turin should look to Aesculapius and Hygeia as their patrons[2]; but the reason for the choice of certain other divine patrons is not at all clear. Why the cabmen of Tibur, for instance, picked out Hercules as their tutelary deity is not easy to guess—unless, like Horace in his satires, the ancient cabby thought of Hercules as the god of treasure-trove, and therefore the inspirer of generous tips.

The religious side of Roman trade associations will not surprise us, however, when we recall the strong religious bent of the Roman character, and when we remember that probably no body of Romans would have thought of forming any kind of organization without procuring the sanction and protection

[1] Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 819–832. [2] *Corpus Inscrip.*, v., 6970.

of the gods. The family, the clan, the state, all had their protecting deities to whom appropriate rites were paid on stated occasions.[1]

That these religious connexions were anything more than mere conventionality is very doubtful. It was the fashion of the age to decorate organizations with a certain religious frilling, but it meant next to nothing. Certainly there is no trace of any test of character or creed having been applied to candidates for admission. It is also important to notice that there was practically no idea of charity in the Collegia ; and that, though the members sometimes spoke of themselves as a brotherhood, there was nothing to warrant the term in the presence of brotherly feeling. In one particular only did they approach the ideal of fraternity: occasionally slaves were found to be members of the same club as freedmen or even citizens ; but this appears to have been a rare occurrence.[2]

One other matter pertaining to their history needs

[1] The arguments in these paragraphs I owe to Professor Abbott's *The Common People of Ancient Rome*, pp. 230, 231.

[2] Valerius Maximus (2. 1. 8) describes a feast which he called the Charistia (=χαρίστια), which would come more nearly to the Agape than Collegia usually did. It was an annual family repast held three days after the Parentalia on February 20. At it all family quarrels and misunderstandings were reconciled. Ovid in his *Fasti* (ii. 617) refers to it :

> Proxima cognati dixere charistia cari
> Et venit ad socios turba propinqua deos.

(Cf. Mart. ix. 56. 1.)

to be set down before this section is closed. About the time when Christianity came on the scene in Rome the Collegia were at the zenith of their power. It was the moment of their triumph, but it was also the moment of their undoing. They had begun to play too big a part in the political games of the Republic.[1] They had grown unpopular, too, with the authorities because some of the more powerful guilds had supported the Catiline conspiracy, and more stringent measures were being formulated against them. This repression of them began under the Republic,[2] and was continued by Augustus and Trajan[3]; but of this fact notice will be taken later on.

The vexed question now arises, Was there any connexion, and, if so, what was the connexion, between the Roman Collegia and the Agape?

(*a*) There is certainly a considerable resemblance between the pagan gatherings and those of the early Christians. The organization of the meeting, the names of their officials, the funeral benefits and other social purposes of the brotherhood, the religious element—all are present in each arrangement.

[1] See Cicero, *Sest.* 14. 32. and *Verr.* 2. 241, par. 100. The inscriptions on the walls of Pompeii illustrate the truth of the contention. See *Corpus Inscrip.*, vol. iv., Nos. 202, 710, 787.

[2] Cicero, *In Pis.* 4, and Suetonius, *Caes.* 42.

[3] Suetonius, *Octav.* 32. But see specially Keating, Appendix.

(*b*) It is recognized to-day that early Christianity followed a policy of syncretism when it came into contact with the pagan world. On matters which were non-moral and non-essential it adopted as much as possible of the ordinary usages of society. The heathen feasts were sometimes taken over and made Christian by a change of motive and name. If suitable opportunity and inducement arose, there was an *a priori* likelihood that something similar might take place with regard to the Collegia.[1]

(*c*) We must remember, too, that almost all the Gentile converts to Christianity, whether in Europe, Asia Minor, or Egypt, had previously been members of guilds of which one great and happy feature had been the periodical banquet. The same was true in a slightly different sense, as we shall see, with regard to the Jewish converts to Christianity. Not only did their tastes and usages lie in the direction of some such expression of fellowship, but, more than we can realize to-day, their very livelihood may have depended on their connexion with some Collegium, no matter what its nature. To take a single instance, a poor Christian would find it necessary to insure himself in regard to funeral benefit. He had only one place in which that was possible, a heathen club, which ate at its banquets meat offered to

[1] See Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, chapter iv.

idols, and which acknowledged as its patron some false god. If the Agape had not come as a part of Christian usage, around which certain charitable ideas and institutions were fast gathering, the new converts would themselves have been forced to invent some such organization.

(*d*) In the days of persecution which arose in the beginning of the second century it was soon discovered that there was a possibility of getting a certain measure of peaceable worship only if the meetings for fellowship and worship were brought within the permission given by Trajan to Collegia Tenuiorum (i.e. charitable clubs) to hold meetings.

On the whole question, therefore, while we cannot go so far as to say that the Agape was definitely adopted by the early Christians from the Collegia or the Sodalicia of Rome, or from the ἐράνοι, συσσίτια, or φιδίτια of the Greek States, or even from the common meals of the Jews, we can yet say that most of the converts to Christianity had a predisposition to such brotherhoods and common meals, and that one of the great attractions of early Christianity was that the apostolic usage included a Love-feast, which was one of the happiest of the Christian customs, and had even been sanctified by the usage of their Lord.

Dr. Maclean puts the matter clearly when he says, 'The most probable account of the origin of the

Agape would seem to be that the Christians of the apostolic age, desirous of showing their unity and brotherly love, imitated the Jewish and heathen custom of having common meals; they could not join the heathen guilds because of the idolatry that would be involved in doing so, and therefore they had what corresponded to these guilds among themselves, namely, the Agape.'[1]

[1] Article in *E.R.E.*

II

JEWISH PARALLELS

Bishop Lightfoot (*Col.*, p. 82) says that the great enigma of Hebrew history is the sect of the Essenes, that wonderful ascetic community among the Jews whose existence can be traced for over two centuries, from about 150 B.C. to the Fall of Jerusalem. While the Essenes are not directly referred to in the New Testament, there is little doubt that their ideas and practices had some degree of influence on Christian usages. It has, indeed, been a favourite idea with commentators that John the Baptist was himself an Essene. De Quincey (*Essays*) goes so far as to maintain that, under the name of Essenes, Josephus is really describing a Christian community. How far the common meals of the Essenes formed a precedent for Christian Love-feasts is the only question necessary to be discussed here.

The name 'Essene' is probably, though not certainly, derived from the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word 'Hasidim' ('pious ones'), and to understand Essene usages one would have to go back to the Pietists of the pre-Maccabean period. Both the Essenes and the Pharisees are offshoots of these 'Hasidim,' or Pietists; but by far the more interesting of the two are the Essenes. They can scarcely be called a sect or party; they seem to have corresponded more closely to a monastic order or community. They lived solely by the work of their hands, and dwelt in a state of communism. Many of them were great students of the law, and they were generally characterized as benevolent and devotional. Pliny the Elder (*H.N.* v. 17), speaking of an Essene community in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, calls it the marvel of the world, and says it was a race continuing its existence for thousands of centuries (!) without either wives and children or money for support. For our information on the Essenes we are dependent, however, on Josephus and on Philo. The latter describes their communism as follows:

'No one possesses a house absolutely his own . . . for in addition to living together in companies ("haburot"), their houses are open also to their adherents coming from other quarters. They have one storehouse for all and the same diet,

their garments belong to all in common, and their meals are taken in common.'[1]

Josephus gives a long account of the Essenes in *De Bello Judaico* (ii. 8, § 2–13), but this account seems to have been taken from another source and worked over, for we find a similar but more accurate version of the matter in Hippolytus's *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium.* He says:

'Their way of dressing and their general appearance are decorous; but they possess neither two cloaks, nor two pairs of shoes (cf. Matt. x. 10, &c.). At early dawn they rise for devotion and prayer, and speak not a word to one another till they have praised God in hymns.' (Josephus adds to this that in their morning prayer they turn towards the rising sun.) 'Thus they go forth each to his work until the fifth hour, when, having put on linen aprons to conceal their privy parts, they bathe in cold water, and then proceed to breakfast. . . . Having taken their seats in order amid silence, each takes a sufficient portion of food; but none eats before the benediction has been offered by the priest, who also recites the grace after the meal; both at the beginning and the close they praise

[1] See Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa*, ed. Conybeare, also the fragments which have been preserved in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, xi. See also Jewish Encyclopaedia, 'Essenes.' See also *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, 'Essenes.' See, too, Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i.

God in hymns. After this they lay aside their sacred linen garments used at the meal, put on their working garments left in the vestibule, and betake themselves to their labour until the evening, when they take supper.'[1]

There are two important matters, then, to be noted regarding these Essenes. In the first place, it seems likely enough that some at least of the early followers of our Lord may have belonged to these brotherhoods, or at least been imbued with their spirit. In the second place, we cannot fail to see several points in common between Essenism and Christianity. There was the same communism (Acts iv.), the same acceptance of baptism, the same aversion to marriage, the same rules for travelling brethren, and above all the same brotherly meals or Love-feasts. It adds to the force of the parallel when we remember that Essenism and early Christianity had a considerable body of ethical and apocalyptic teaching in common. That Jesus Himself was an Essene, as some have ventured to say, is quite unthinkable, for He was an undoubted opponent of all those ascetic tendencies which were the chief feature of Essenism in His time; further, too, He dealt with the problems of a sinful human nature from a far other standpoint than the mere use of rigour and self-chastisement.

[1] Hippolytus, ix. 18–28.

Perhaps, then, all we may say regarding the Essenes and the Agape is that possibly the tendency to engage in common meals with religious purport among the early Jewish Christians was fostered and helped by the fact that they were accustomed to such an idea among some of their own peoples, an idea that was already in high repute because of the holiness of character borne by the exemplars.

It has been suggested that the Agape was influenced by the other body or brotherhood described by Philo[1] as the Therapeutae, or 'Worshippers.'[1] These were a community of Jewish recluses who lived on the shores of Lake Mareotis, in the vicinity of Alexandria, in the time of Philo. Eusebius[2] calls them Christian monks, but in this he is not correct.[3] They were like the Essenes in many of their usages, such as morning prayers, and in their allegorical interpretation of Scripture. They lived a monastic life in cells, and they had a common meal. It was a very simple affair, consisting of bread and salt and herbs (hyssop) and water from the spring. Unlike the Essenes, however, women were admitted to the community. These nursed and educated the waifs and non-Jewish children who took refuge with the order. In worship and in the common meals the women were separated from

[1] *De Vita Contemplativa.* [2] ii. 16, 17.
[3] See Conybeare, *The Contemplative Life.*

the men. Young men waited on the men's tables, and young women on the women's tables. All wore white raiment as did the Essenes. After the repast, passages of Scripture were explained by the presiding officer and other speakers. Each of these interpretations was followed by the singing of hymns in chorus, in which both men and women joined. Sometimes the festival was protracted into the night, and ended with a sort of sacred dance.

That there is a certain degree of resemblance between the common meal of the Therapeutae and the Agape is apparent, but at the same time one has to conclude that the likelihood of the Christian meal being an outcome of the Therapeutic usage is extremely slight. To give no other reason, there does not seem to have been any trace of the order in Palestine or in Asia Minor, where the Agape certainly came into being.

Indeed, the sum of the matter seems to be that if we are to find any relation between the common meals of Jewish devotees and the Christian Agape it must be along the line of the underlying spirit of devout brotherhood which was ingrained into a great deal of the Hebrew religion, and which had its expression in such fellowships and fraternities as the Essenes and the Therapeutae. Yet while this is said as to origin, there was still scope for a different form of relationship

There is a strong probability that the Christian usages in the Agape took at least a colouring from the usages of the Jewish 'common meals.' These meals were always of a family character, and the description which Edersheim (p. 207, chap. xii., vol. ii.) gives from the Talmud (Ber. 43a) may serve here :

> 'As the guests enter they sit down on chairs, and water is brought to them, with which they wash one hand. Into this the cup is taken, when each speaks the blessing over the wine partaken of before dinner. Presently they all lie down at table. Water is again brought them, with which they wash both hands preparatory to the meal. When the blessing is spoken over the bread, and then over the cup, by the chief person at the feast, or else by one selected by way of distinction, the company respond by "*Amen*," always supposing the benediction to have been spoken by an Israelite, not a heathen, slave, nor law-breaker. Nor was it lawful to say it with an unlettered man, although it might be said with a Cuthaean (i.e. heretic, or else Samaritan) who was learned. After dinner the crumbs, if any, are carefully gathered, hands are again washed, and he who first had done so leads in the prayer of thanksgiving.'

As to the menu provided at these meals, Edersheim says that every legitimate article of food was allowable. Milk and eggs and fish were favourites, and

wine was in common use, though it was generally mixed with water. Spiced wine with honey and pepper, palm wine, and wine of myrrh were usual drinks.

The description just given may serve as a fairly accurate description of what was known as the Kiddūsh, or preparation of the Sabbath, a weekly meal, in which some writers have seen an analogue of the Agape and the Eucharist. This ceremony, however, was not confined to the preparation for the weekly Sabbath, but also preceded other festivals, such as the Passover. It has been suggested by Mr. G. H. Box[1] that the Eucharist and the Agape were begun, not at a Paschal meal, but at a Kiddūsh ceremony, such as we have described. The only real advantage that this theory can claim is that it accounts for the frequent communion and celebration of the Agape in the early Church. The arguments against the theory, however, are forceful. 'Two considerations seem fatal to it. It assumes that the Eucharist followed by the Agape (for Mr. Box believes the Eucharist to have come first) represented the Jewish Kiddūsh followed by a festive meal. But at the Last Supper the Eucharist certainly *followed* the meal (1 Cor. xi. 25), and the

[1] See Rev. G. H. Box, 'The Jewish Antecedents of the Eucharist,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, iii. 357–369. He holds that 'the true Jewish antecedent of the Christian Eucharist is not the Passover but the Kiddūsh.'

balance of the argument appears to be against the order required by this theory for the Christian Agape. And, further, the Paschal character of the Last Supper seems too prominent for us to be convinced that it was not *in some sense* a Paschal meal.[1]

Before leaving the subject of the Kiddūsh ceremony it is interesting to trace a curious parallel between the future history of the Agape and the Jewish meal.[2] We shall see that the Agape, which was at first a simple meal, became in time a sort of charity supper for the poor. A similar development took place in the Kiddūsh in the Middle Ages. A synagogue custom gradually grew up of making provision for the entertainment of poor travellers. They were lodged and fed either in the synagogue itself or in rooms provided for the purpose in the adjoining premises. For the advantage of these travellers the synagogue reader each evening recited the ritual of the Kiddūsh, which was, as we have seen, originally a family ceremony. Even after the custom of hospitality died out the reading continued, and continues to this day.

[1] Quoted from article, 'Agape,' by A. J. Maclean, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*

[2] Cf. Oesterley and Box, *Synagogue Religion and Worship*, pp. 345–349.

III

THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD

In order to discover the apostolic usage regarding the Agape, it is best to start from the Acts of the Apostles, as being the book that gives us a clear account of the initial stages of church organization and customs. While the Agape is not mentioned by name in the Acts of the Apostles, it is referred to, and there are several matters that are connected with and akin to it. We may see these in connexion with some passages.[1]

Acts ii. 42.

'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.'

[1] I do not care to lay much stress on Acts i. 4–6, 'And being assembled together with them . . . when they therefore were come together,' though a strong array of modern commentators is on the

In Greek the four terms, 'teaching,' 'fellowship' (κοινωνία), 'breaking of bread' (κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου), and 'prayers' are all defined by the article. The R.V. rightly places the article before the word 'prayers,' changing it from an abstract to a concrete concept in order to emphasize the fact that the original may possibly refer to liturgical prayer or to stated hours of prayer. On the other hand, it is curious how the Revisers failed to see that 'the fellowship' might likewise be something concrete and definite. Dr. Hort, indeed, held that κοινωνία meant 'the communion,' and that it referred to a definite portion of worship. By parallelism with the other terms he contended that it expresses something more external and concrete than a spirit of fellowship, and that it probably had reference to the help given to the destitute of the community, not apparently in money but in public meals, such as are elsewhere (vi. 2) called 'the daily ministration.' If that be so, and it seems very probable, we have in this text a fourfold division of public worship, the Exhortation, the Eucharist, the Agape (these two conjoined), and the Liturgy.

The junction of the words 'the fellowship' and 'the breaking of bread' is certainly peculiar, for

side of this being a reference to an Agape. The word συναλίζομενος (Vulgate, 'convescens illis') probably means 'eating with them' (so A.V. and R.V. in margin). Holtzmann says it refers to a common meal, but see Dr. Knowling (*E.G.T.*), ad loc.

there is no doubt that[1] the conjunction 'and' inserted between the two words should not be in the text. The correct reading appears to be 'In the teaching of the apostles and the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers.'[2]

There seems to be implied in the text an underlying connexion between the two conceptions of fellowship and breaking of bread. The Vulgate recognizes this by translating it, 'In the communication of the breaking of bread' (*in communicatione fractionis panis*). The Peschitto goes further and translates it, 'In the breaking of the Eucharist.' The distribution of the copulas is certainly peculiar, but I fear it is scarcely safe to draw any conclusion from the matter in view of the fact that even St. Luke does not seem to have grasped the Grecian usages of the word καὶ, but simply to have used it in the places in which a Hebrew would have used *vav*.

There is one more matter in this connexion. It is pretty certain that in classical Greek κοινωνία has rarely an absolute sense. Its usual meaning is 'partnership, association, society,' and in another sense 'sexual intercourse.' Liddell and Scott[3]

[1] The καὶ is omitted by ℵ A.B.C.D., and so Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, Weiss, Wendt, Alford, and Nestle. The R.V. would be a correct translation if it put an article before 'fellowship.'

[2] See the *E.G.T.*, ad loc., for a good exposition of this passage.

[3] Th. Harnack, however, takes an opposite view.

considered, too, that in the New Testament the word was found more frequently in the concrete sense as implying 'a common gift, charitable contribution, alms'; and indeed in the large majority of cases in the New Testament in which the verb and noun occur they refer to something that is quite concrete. What this definite thing must be will become more clear as we proceed to find the usages of the Agape becoming more precisely described by the historians and church writers.

Acts ii. 46.

'And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home (A.V. "from house to house"), they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart.'

Here there is some new material in our search; for it is clear that in this passage the phrase 'breaking bread' cannot refer to ordinary meals, else we should have a redundancy of expression which is quite foreign to St. Luke's style. The same expression, 'break bread,' became later an almost technical expression, as in the Didache, either for the Agape itself (Didache, ix.) or for the Agape and the Eucharist combined (xiv.).

Acts vi. 1, 2.

'Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

'And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the Word of God, and serve tables.'

These verses recount the occasion of the establishment of an order of deacons in the Church. The Greek-speaking Jews complained that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration (διακονία καθημερινή). What that daily service was is not made clear in the passage, but light is thrown on it by the verse following, where the apostles reply that it is not proper for them to leave the Word of God, and serve at tables (διακονεῖν τραπέζαις). These tables appear to have been the tables for the daily supply of food to the poor, and possibly to almost all the members of the early Church in Jerusalem. To refer them, as some commentators do, to the tables of the money-changers, and to imagine that there was a distribution of money daily, and that it was of such amount as to require the services of seven officers of the church, and that there were so great numbers of Christian poor in one small city, and in the years A.D. 37–38, is the height of improbability.

Dr. Plumptre's description[1] of 'a clamorous crowd of applicants besieging the house at which the apostles held their meeting, at the times appointed for giving relief in money or in kind . . . it was like the dole of alms at the gate of a convent,' is almost absurd. Taking the words in their easy and natural sense, one sees that trouble had arisen at the daily common meal, the foretaste of much trouble to follow in later years, and that the apostles found that they could not give enough time to the oversight and preparation of such feasts. A certain amount of previous arrangement was necessary, much more than for the mere distribution of money, and therefore seven men were appointed for the oversight of the daily Agapae[2]; and we are at liberty to surmise that one deacon was intended for the duty of each day in the week.

Acts xx. 7–11.

Here we have a fairly distinct account of an early Church meeting. Paul 'tarried at Troas seven days.'

'And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them . . . and prolonged his speech

[1] In Ellicott's *Commentary*, ad loc.
[2] See Dr. Knowling's excellent note in *Expositor's Greek Testament*.

until midnight . . . [Eutychus incident] . . . and when he was gone up and had broken the bread and had eaten, and had talked with them a long time, even till break of day, so he departed.'

Most commentators on the Acts (Wendt, Holtzmann, Weiss, Blass, Lewin, Wordsworth, Alford, &c.) are convinced that there is a clear reference here to an Agape on the Sunday evening. If the phrase had simply been 'broken the bread,' the case would not have been quite clear. It might only have referred to the Eucharist; but it is generally acknowledged that the use of γεύομαι indicates a common meal. When one reads a more detailed description of the Agape, such as that given by Tertullian (p. 98), one can see how the language used in this passage admirably suits the Agape, and is difficult to reconcile with any other hypothesis.

The uses of the word κλάζω (or κλάω) and its cognate nouns κλάσις and κλάσμα in the New Testament require a sentence or two. They are used some eighteen times in the Gospels, and are always used of Jesus Christ, and are grouped around four incidents—the two miracles of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, the Paschal Supper, and the Emmaus incident. It was only to be expected that in the early Church the words should come to have a distinctly Christian connotation. This is borne

out by the fact that on the other seven occasions in which they occur in the New Testament they refer to either the Eucharist or Agape, or perhaps to both conjoined.

To sum the matter up, it seems from the evidence of the Acts of the Apostles that the junction of Agape and Eucharist which took place on the night of the Paschal Supper was retained as a custom by the apostles and disciples, and gradually settled down into a church usage and ceremony. Whether they went about ' from house to house ' is a matter which the ambiguous phrase κατ' οἶκον will not allow us to decide with any certainty.

1 *Cor.* xi. 18–34.

The New Testament reference to the Agape to which we may turn next comes from a document earlier in date than the Acts of the Apostles—St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Certain abuses of greed and drunkenness had grown up around the Love-feast; and Paul, with characteristic energy, reproves the culprits. The important verses are given as follows in Dr. Beet's literal translation:

18. ' For in the first place, when you come together in church meeting I hear that divisions exist among you. . . .

20. ' When, then, you come together to the same place, there is no eating the Lord's Supper ;

21. ' For his own supper each one takes beforehand in the eating : and one is hungry and another is drunken.

22. ' Have you not (is this the reason ?) houses for eating and drinking ? . . .

33. ' So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait one for another :

34. ' If any one is hungry, let him eat at home ; in order that you may not come together for judgement. . . .'

In these verses there are several difficulties of exegesis, but there is no possible dispute regarding the fact that a common meal is referred to. There are only two alternatives : either there was an Agape followed by a Eucharist held in Corinth, or else the Eucharist itself was treated as a real meal, capable of satisfying hunger, and at which it was possible to drink to excess. That the Holy Sacrament a few years after its institution was so grossly abused as to be an occasion for debauchery and noise is, in the light of all the history of the matter, quite unthinkable.

We have seen (p. 19) that Socrates had to deal with a case of gluttony in Greek fellowship more than four centuries before ; and this passage in St. Paul's Epistle presents us with a similar picture of

selfishness, vanity, and sensuality corrupting a beautiful ceremony of the early Church. It was, indeed, little wonder that in later days the Church found it impossible in most places to allow the Agape and Lord's Supper to be united, and, later still, found it undesirable to continue the use of the Agape at all in view of the gross abuses to which it was liable.

We may pick out from this passage in the Corinthians some of the features of the Agape in the apostolic age at Corinth. The table was provisioned, not from a general fund (as was usual in the Roman Collegia), but by each person bringing his contribution in kind, a practice not uncommon in private parties, but which had the disadvantage of accentuating social differences. While the poor man brought little or nothing to the feast, and might be ashamed to show his face, the rich man exhibited a loaded basket out of which he could feed to repletion. All κοινωνία was destroyed; such vulgarity would have disgraced a heathen guild-feast. The Lord, the common Host, was forgotten at His table.[1]

Batiffol[2] thinks that this passage does not prove the actual existence and establishment of the Agape in the Church of Corinth; he thinks that St. Paul is only rebuking an abnormality that has sprung up.

[1] G. G. Findlay, *Expositor's Greek Testament*, ad loc.
[2] Batiffol, *Études*, p. 281.

But (as Ermoni points out in reply, p. 9, &c.) ' if St. Paul had had as his object to reprove the institution of a common meal, he would have gone straight to the point and directly attacked the meal itself and not merely the abuses which accompanied the celebration.' Paul does not rail against the fact that men bring food and drink to church, but that there is no charity or Christian equality in the distribution of the victuals. The rich ate up their own provisions, and the poor received no share. In no sense could that be called a common meal, and certainly there was no love in it. The unity and equality of the Church, which were essential features of the Eucharist, were lamentably absent from the Agape which preceded it. The recommendation in verse 33 to wait for one another when they gather together to eat shows that St. Paul is considering something other than the Eucharist, in which there was never any reason for such a precaution.

There is certainly good reason to believe that in Jerusalem and Corinth in the apostolic period common meals were celebrated among the disciples. There are, however, two points not clear: First, the name ' Agape ' has not yet transpired as having been given to these meals; second, we have not traced the relationship of the Agape to the meals celebrated during the life of Jesus Christ.

For the first use of the name 'Agape' we have to turn to the General Epistle of St. Jude and to the Second Epistle of St. Peter:

Jude 12.

'These are spots (Greek, σπιλάδες; R.V., "hidden rocks") in your feasts of charity (ἀγάπαις; R.V., "love-feasts") when they feast with you, feeding themselves (ποιμαίνοντες) without fear.'

There are three points to be noticed in this verse. Here is the only clear mention by name of the Love-feast in the New Testament. It is not possible, however, that the name took its origin from this passage. The word is used by Jude in such a casual way as to imply that the reference was to something already well established, and whose name was familiar. We saw that the name 'Love' had already been associated with such meals in Greek usage (p. 18). We shall see later that the beautiful incident of the meal prepared by our Lord on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias, and recorded in the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, with its insistence on the need for love, had a good deal to do with the name of the Christian feast.

The meaning of σπιλάδες is not connected with the study of the Agape, but the metaphor of the sunken

rocks appears to be more suitable than the idea of 'spots.'[1]

There is nothing very significant about the fact that the Agape is not here associated with the Eucharist. We cannot say that the cleavage between the two had set in at this time, seeing that Jude had no reason to refer to the Eucharist at this point.

2 *Peter* ii. 13.

This passage is the well-known parallel to that just quoted from the Epistle of St. Jude. The writer of 2 Peter has evidently used and remade the material from the smaller letter. He speaks of men

> 'that count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, spots and blemishes revelling in their love-feasts, while they feast with you' (R.V.).

Here there is a measure of doubt regarding the word for 'love-feasts.' The Received Text read ἐν ταῖς ἀπάταις, 'in their deceivings.' This is the reading of ℵ A.C.K.L.P., and is also the reading of Westcott and Hort and Tischendorf. The better reading, however, undoubtedly is that of the corrector of the Codex Alexandrinus and of the Codex Vaticanus, viz. ἀγάπαις. This is the reading adopted by the

[1] For the critical questions involved see *E.G.T.*, and also Dr. Charles Bigg in the *I.C.C.*

Revisers and by most modern editors, including Nestle. At any rate the variation of reading does not greatly affect the argument, for the reference of the passage is plainly to the Agape, though if we accept the R.V. reading it also gives us the name of the meal.

Dr. Bigg[1] has discovered, as he thinks, a further reference to the Agape in the first part of the text. He translates it, 'Counting our sober daylight joy (i.e. the Agape) mere vulgar pleasure.' The Agape, he contends, is called 'our daylight joy' because it had already become common to dismiss the feasters before dark. For this, however, there is scarcely enough proof, unless the date of the Epistle is placed somewhere about the end of the second century. An interesting sidelight on the text is given by the same writer when he portrays how St. Peter had become acquainted with the Agape in Antioch. He suggests that not long after the Council of Jerusalem St. Peter visited Antioch, stayed there some time, and was present on more than one occasion at the Agape. The church at Antioch was still divided at that time, and separate tables were laid, possibly in separate buildings, for Gentiles and Jews. At first Peter took his seat among the Gentiles. This was what he had done in the house of Cornelius, and it is not easy to

[1] *I.C.C.*, ad loc.

see how his conduct involved any breach of the recent decree ; but when it became known to James and Paul a stormy scene took place, and Peter was rebuked ! There is, of course, only the flimsiest basis for such a picture.

Before it is possible to answer the query regarding the name and source of the Love-feasts, some passages from the Gospels dealing with common meals must be examined.

IV

THE ORIGIN AND NAME OF THE AGAPE

A READER can scarcely fail to notice in the Gospels the frequency of the references to matters of food and drink. Christ began His public ministry at a feast, and on several occasions preached effectively from the triclinium at banquets. Twice He fed multitudes miraculously, and the Scribes and Pharisees complained that He ate and drank with publicans and sinners. He drew some of the most effective of His metaphors and parables from the usages of meals; and altogether He seems to have felt that He had come into a world where men and women were always hungering and thirsting. When, too, He came to face death, He showed no great anxiety to perpetuate doctrine, nor even to establish a Church and worship, but with strong desire He planned that a meal, connected in a mystic sense with His divine sacrifice, should be continued in memory of Him till He come again.

In later days, when the early Christians met for their common meals, they looked to the Last Supper as one of the main sources of their custom ; but they also delighted to weave round it recollections of other kindred incidents in the Lord's ministry. They therefore linked the Agape with the miraculous feedings, with the evening meal at Emmaus, with the post-resurrection suppers in the upper room, and with the meal prepared by the risen Lord on the shores of Lake Tiberias (John xxi. 1–24).

There is no need to enter on a discussion of the many questions involved in the four accounts of the Last Supper. It is sufficient to say that it a was meal partaken in common. It does not appear to have been a strict Jewish Passover. The *pièce de resistance*—the central symbol of the Passover—the roasted lamb, is not mentioned. It was rather the inauguration of a new order than the celebration of an old one. A few weeks later, when the infant Church began to live again after the death of its Founder, the disciples, when they met together in the upper room, naturally strove to reproduce, as a salve to wounded memory, the spirit and arrangements of that mystic and tragic night. They could scarcely meet for their evening meal without making it a sacrament in which they called o memory the dying love of the Lord.

It was no mere accident that this emphasis came

to be placed on a common meal with a sacramental conclusion. Had not the Risen One Himself honoured their meetings on the Sunday evenings after His rising by His presence and blessing? On one of these visits He found them eating broiled fish and a piece of a honeycomb. Was it any wonder, therefore, that in days to come this same menu continued to have a place in the Agapae? In the Catacombs, among the many crude pictures of common meals, there is scarcely one which does not portray a plate containing fish. Honey, too, became another item of food frequently used in the early Love-feasts. These two post-resurrection suppers might well have supplied a name for the common meal, in the word 'Eirene'—'Peace,' which was the Lord's greeting on both occasions that He visited them, if it had not been that a third meal in which the risen Lord participated supplied an even better name. It was on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias that this event took place. To the disciples this meal became of almost sacrificial import. It was the final meal before His ascension, just as the Paschal Supper had been His last meal before death on the cross. One word characterized the incident, and indeed to later converts who revered St. Peter, dominated the whole incident. It was a meal of 'Love.' At it Jesus emphasized to St. Peter and the other six, as He had scarcely

done before, the supreme need of Love in its varying meanings. Both 'Agape' and 'Philia' were emphasized and enforced, 'but the greatest of these is Agape.'

That this lakeside meal gave the name to the Agape there cannot be much doubt. We shall see that in the catacomb pictures the words 'Eirene' and 'Agape' are at times connected with the common meal, but the preponderance is given to the word 'Agape'; we shall see, too, that in many of the pictures the number of figures is not twelve, as at the Last Supper, nor ten, nor eleven, as at the post-resurrection suppers, but seven, in evident remembrance of the 'come and dine' incident recorded by St. John in his last chapter.

It is a little extraordinary how the writers on the Agape have overlooked this pertinent incident, and have sought elsewhere for the source of the name 'Agape.' The fact that the Agape and the Eucharist were joined in one ceremony for over a century has turned attention almost exclusively to the Last Supper; but the significance of this last meal (at Tiberias) of our Lord on earth is very great. It was a meal deliberately arranged and prepared by Himself, probably the only one ever so arranged by Him. It was introduced by a striking miracle, the miraculous draught of fishes; and that it became in later days a much-discussed incident is

evidenced by the fact that St. John found it necessary, after he had finished his Gospel and perhaps published it, to add a supplement describing accurately what had taken place on that important occasion. Surely, then, one may conclude that we have in it the incident which of all others eventually decided the title which the common meal of the Christians was to bear.

One other fact adds weight to this conclusion. If the Agape had been altogether a remembrance of the night in which the Lord broke bread in the institution of the Holy Sacrament, there would never have grown up any tendency in the following centuries to view it as a comparatively unimportant ceremony, to be rejected at will. Certainly the early Church would not have allowed it so easily to die out, and indeed have hastened its decease in places, if it had been considered an integral part of the Eucharist, enjoined by our Lord Himself on a most solemn occasion.[1]

Before summing up the matter there is another consideration of a little weight. In the story of

[1] Moulton and Milligan, in the *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1914), say, concerning the word ἀγάπη, 'Though it would be going too far to say that this important biblical word was "born within the bosom of revealed religion," it is remarkable that there have been only three supposed instances of its use in "profane" Greek, two of which are now read otherwise, and the third is doubtful.'

On the whole it seems as if ἀγάπη is one of the few critical words of New Testament Greek on which the Papyri have shed no important light.

the Two on the Road to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 30–35), 'It came to pass that when He had sat down with them to meat, He took the bread (marg. "loaf") and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them; and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.'[1] The language of verse 30 is unmistakable as referring to a particular kind of Benediction and Fraction which revealed the Lord, even when to outward gaze He was almost unrecognizable.[2] But the two, Cleophas and his companion, were not apostles, for when they returned to the city 'they found the eleven gathered together.' It is clear, therefore, that if they knew Jesus' method of breaking bread, it was not because He taught it only at the Last Supper, for they were not there. It arose from His habitual action over the meals held with His followers, at which He apparently adopted some particular form of blessing and ceremony. Thus it follows, I think, that during the greater part of His ministry He took every opportunity with His disciples of making their meals special seasons of instruction and edification, and generally impressed them with the necessity for sanctifying such times with the salt of worship.

It is now possible, with these factors in view, to reconstruct the situation which led to the institution of the Agape.

[1] λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησε, καὶ κλάσας ἐπιδίδου αὐτοῖς.
[2] See Godet on Luke, vol. ii. 355, for this view.

Our Lord, through His ministry, laid stress on the spiritual significance of food and drink, and His ministry is in a strange sense a ministry of 'eating and drinking.' At the common meals of the disciples He appears to have used some form of benediction and breaking that was peculiarly His own. The climax and culmination of these meals took place on the night when He was betrayed. On that night He washed the disciples' feet, broke the bread, blessed the food, and instituted the solemn ceremony of the Holy Communion.

When the crucifixion was past, the disciples were at first stunned and scattered by His death, and the whole future of Christianity seemed to be in peril. It was the common meal—call it the Agape—which, from one point of view, saved the situation. They had to eat! They were accustomed to eat together; and when they met on the Sunday evening for their common meal, Jesus, the risen Jesus, was there too, the same while not quite the same, but at any rate living once more. Is it any wonder that every common meal thenceforth became instinct with expectation of meeting Him? Nor did He disappoint them. On at least one other occasion in the upper room He came to them; and on a never-to-be-forgotten morning He met seven of them on the shores of Lake Tiberias, and with His own hand prepared a meal for them, the

last of all His meals with His apostles in His bodily form. It was at this final meal on the sea-shore that St. Peter was restored to his apostleship and received his commission, and the great strange messages and questions concerning Love were put and told. In later days, when they talked of the last meal, the one word that sprang to remembrance concerning it was 'Love.' It was nothing else than a Love-feast. At the earlier meals He had come with a message of Peace; but when years went by it was not the name 'Eirene' that clung to the feast, but 'Agape.'

Such, I venture to suggest, was the story of the Agape in its beginning.

V

THE AGAPE IN ASIA IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

When one leaves the apostolic period and searches in the literature of the second and third centuries, it is astonishing what a large amount of material is to be found concerning the Agape. Simply to collect the data and put the facts under the time-labels of the different centuries is almost useless. To arrange the material so as to give a view of the growth and decay of the Agape in each of the three great districts touched by early Christianity, Asia, Africa, and Europe, seems at least to promise a more logical survey. That arrangement is observed in the following chapters. It will be noticeable how the African Churches allowed their Agape to deteriorate almost from its inception. In the history of the Roman Churches it will be interesting to see how advantage was taken of the imperial legislation

regarding Collegia to protect the interests of Christians, and later when persecution ceased, the need for the Agape and its existence ceased simultaneously. As regards the Asiatic Churches, for the most part there does not appear to have been either great need for the Agape, nor, on the other hand, great deterioration in it. In consequence it seems to have dragged out a longer and more uneventful life, and in some instances to have left relics even to modern times.

The search for information with regard to Asia may well begin with one of the most valuable early Christian documents, the Didache, or 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' the date of which, it is generally agreed, cannot be later than A.D. 140, and it is quite likely that it was written somewhere about A.D. 120. Its place of origin was probably Jerusalem. Two chapters in the Didache, ix. and x., have given rise to a good deal of discussion. Some have found in them a reference to the Eucharist only, others to the Agape, while other commentators have found reference to both the Eucharist and the Agape. The passages in question are as follows:

Chapter ix.

1. 'As for the Eucharist, give thanks thus:

2. 'At first for the chalice, "We thank thee, O Father, for the holy vine of David, Thy servant

whom Thou hast caused us to know through Jesus Thy Servant ; Glory to Thee, world without end."

3. 'For the bread, "We give Thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou hast caused us to know in Jesus, Thy Servant. Glory to Thee, world without end.

4. '"As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains, and now being brought together has become one whole, so may Thy Church be brought together from the extremities of the earth into Thy Kingdom ; for Thine is the glory and the power in Jesus Christ for ever."

5. 'Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, if they have not been baptized in the name of the Lord. For it is of this that the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."'

Chapter x.

1. 'After you are satiated give thanks as follows :

2. '"We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy name which Thou hast made to dwell in our hearts, for knowledge, faith, and immortality, which Thou hast made us know in Jesus Christ, Thy Servant. Glory to Thee for ever.

3. '"It is Thou, Almighty Master, who hast created everything for the glory of Thy name, who hast given to men food and drink to enjoy in order that they may give Thee thanks ; but to us Thou hast given spiritual food and drink, and life eternal by our Lord.

4. '"Above all we thank Thee that Thou art all-powerful. Glory to Thee for ever.

5. '"Remember, Lord, to deliver Thy Church from every evil, and to perfect it in Thy love, and gather it together from the four winds of heaven, made holy, in Thy kingdom that Thou hast prepared for it, because Thine is the power and the glory for ever.

6. '"Let Thy grace come, and let this world pass away: Hosanna to the God of David. If any one is holy, let him come. If any one is not holy, let him show penitence. Our Lord cometh: So be it.

7. '"As for the prophets, let them give thanks as much as they desire."'

Now at first sight it seems as if these prayers were designed for the Eucharist. But there are other factors to be taken into count.[1]

Chapters xiv. and xv. of the Didache treat directly of the Eucharist; and if we consider the prayers just quoted from chapters ix. and x. as being Eucharistic prayers also, we then admit that the Didache treats of the same subject twice. As there is no other evidence of the document being jumbled in character, it certainly seems unlikely that both passages should refer to the same thing.

In x. 1 we read, 'After you are satiated' (μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐμπλησθῆναι). The author can scarcely have used the word 'satiated' of the Eucharist. The word

[1] In the following paragraphs I am summing up Ermoni's arguments.

certainly has more appropriateness as applied to a repast than as applied to the reception of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The terminology of these chapters is not technical. We do not meet with any of those Eucharistic expressions which are common in the later chapters where the sacrament is clearly indicated. In the later passages we find references to the Lord's day, the assembling of the faithful, the confession of sin, sacrifice, ordination of bishops and deacons, worshipping liturgically. At least it is evident that bishops and deacons are present at the celebration of the Eucharist, yet there is no mention of them in the passages we have quoted.

Chapter xi. 9 throws another light on the matter. It says, ' Every prophet preparing the table in spirit will not eat of that table, else he is a false prophet.' Now we know that so far from being prohibited to take part in the Eucharist, prophets took a leading part in its administration (cf. xv. 1, 2), being placed on almost the same footing as bishops and deacons.

Ladeuze calls attention to the further fact that there are differences between the classification of people who may attend each ceremony and the type of prayers used on each occasion. It is specially interesting to see that in the Agape the prophets are free to give full course to their inspiration. Such a procedure in the Eucharist would be quite

antagonistic to all we know of its method of administration.

Of course, it may be said to all this that the case is closed by the use of the word εὐχαριστεῖν and its cognates in ix. 1, 2, 3, 5; x. 2, 3, 4, 7. But this argument is not a good one, for the word probably bears only the meaning of 'thanksgiving,' which is the sense it invariably bears in the New Testament. It was only at a later period that the word came to be applied solely to the Holy Communion as a sort of technical term. Precisely the same may be said of the words 'chalice' and (κλάσμα) 'breaking' (of bread). In the Didache we are dealing with a period when these terms had not yet hardened down into the strict ecclesiastical meanings they received later. More important still is the fact that if this passage refers to the Holy Communion, there are no references to the words used by our Lord in the institution of the sacrament at the Last Supper. No early Church literature that deals with that topic at any length dares to omit the formula of the occasion.

I may sum up the matter by mentioning the various theories about the passage under consideration.

Leclercq thinks that the Didache does not refer to the Agape, but that it is nevertheless in the author's mind.

Mr. Box believes that there is in the passage first a reference to the Eucharist, but that before the phrase about being 'satiated' there should have been inserted a reference to the Love-feasts, which occurred at that point.

Batiffol thinks that it is only the Eucharist that is mentioned here, and the phrase 'after being satiated' is used metaphorically as a souvenir of John vi. 12, 'When they were filled He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain.'

Ermoni goes a little too far in the other direction, and holds that the whole reference is to the Agape.

There can be little doubt that the true view is that formerly given by Lightfoot, and recently supported by Keating and Maclean, viz. that the writer means that the Agape and the Eucharist were combined, and that the Agape came first, as in the Last Supper, and as in the church at Corinth. After the members were satisfied at the common meal, there came the 'fencing of the tables,' which was the connecting link as well as the separating act between the two ceremonies.[1]

If the date of the Didache is uncertain, there is another document of whose early date we are reasonably sure. It is the famous letter regarding

[1] The most scholarly general discussion on the Didache is probably that of Dr. J. Vernon Bartlet in the extra volume of Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

the Christians which the younger Pliny sent to his imperial master, Trajan. The younger Pliny was governor of Bithynia in Pontus, and his correspondence with Trajan belongs to the year A.D. 112, Pliny's letters being written from Amisos (Samsoun, on the Black Sea), in the easterly part of his province. In the most famous of this series of letters (Book x., Letter xcvii.), Pliny complains that he is not very sure what to do with the Christians, who were very numerous, and of all ages and ranks, and who were spreading the more they were persecuted in his province. Describing their religious customs, he says :

'They met on a stated day before it was light and sang hymns (or, addressed a form of prayer) to Christ as God (*Carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem*), binding themselves by a solemn oath,[1] not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up : after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies (*Hetaeriai*). After receiving this

[1] Se sacramento non ad scelus aliquod obstringere ; sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent.

account I judged it all the more necessary to endeavour to extort the real truth by putting two female slaves (*ancillae*) to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites (*quae ministrae dicebantur*), but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition.'

It is apparent that Pliny had not met this 'superstition' before, but at least he seems to have heard the scandalous stories of the Thyestean banquets and the immoral Bacchanalian feasts indulged in by the Christians. He found that the gatherings were really 'ante lucem'; but after fullest consideration he could only conclude that the meal was harmless, an 'innoxius cibus,' and that it was a distinct Christian principle that 'ne adulteria committerent.' He does not appear to have understood what they meant when they talked of a 'Sacramentum.' He knew well the Roman Sacramentum—the oath of fealty taken by soldiers to the Emperor. Perhaps he did not know that, in obedience to the command of their Lord, the early Christians refused to take any oath whatever. So we cannot expect him to have discriminated nicely between the Eucharist and the Agape.[1]

[1] See Keating's note on this passage. He says, 'T. Harnack (*Gemeinde Gottesdienst*, pp. 228, 229) discusses the passage, and adds another possible reference in sacramentum, viz. preaching.'

We are, therefore, in doubt as to which meal came first, and which it was that was given up after the governor's edict had been published. Pliny says there was a morning religious service, and a meal later in the day, which, though it was innocent, had been given up at his command. The only fair interpretation of the passage is that which Lightfoot has given, that 'all alike had abandoned their Agape' (p. 55). Certainly it is unlikely that any body of Christians would readily give up the Holy Sacrament so easily. They would not have purchased peace at such a cost. If any meal was given up, it was most certainly the meal that had the lesser sanction, and that also had accumulated round it the greater notoriety. Of course, it is quite conceivable that the devout Christians gave up neither part of their worship, and that Pliny was deceived by the ready compliance to his orders exhibited by a number of half-hearted Christians who were ready to give up anything in order to save their skins. Pliny's use of the term 'Sacramentum,' of course, gives no light on the matter.

One thing, however, is quite certain, the Agape had penetrated into a remote corner of a remote province, and had become a well-recognized portion of Christian usage in the beginning of the second century. More than that, it had already come into conflict with the Roman laws regarding

Collegia, a conflict whose importance we shall see later.

We have testimony relating to another part of Asia, at about the same time as the correspondence of Pliny and Trajan, but from a Christian source, viz. Ignatius of Antioch. For if the tradition is true that Ignatius was martyred during Trajan's reign, then the date of the Epistles might be put about A.D. 115. Harnack argues, however, that the date might be A.D. 130 or 140, but his arguments have not carried general conviction.

These Epistles are alleged to have been written by Ignatius during his journey through Asia Minor to Rome, where he was to die.[1] There are in them twenty-eight supposed references to the Agape. A few instances will suffice. In his Epistle to the Philadelphians (par. 4, and cf. Eph. xx.) we gather that the Love-feast, with the sacramental commemoration of the Lord's death, took place not only in the appointed meetings of the congregation, but might even take place among smaller groups of worshippers.

In his Epistle to the Romans (par. 7) he says, 'I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ, . . . and for a draught, I desire His blood, which is love (ἀγάπη) incorruptible.' While the

[1] On the interesting but difficult literary problem presented by these Epistles I can only refer to Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*.

primary allusion here is undoubtedly sacramental, there is possibly a secondary reference also to the Agape.[1]

In his Epistle to the Ephesians there is a similar veiled reference (par. 20). He speaks of ' breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote that we should not die, but live for ever in Jesus Christ.' Lightfoot, after an examination of the passage, says, ' The reference will be to the Agape.'

The most important and the most difficult of the four references in the Epistles of Ignatius is found in the Epistle to the Smyrnaeans (chapter vii.), where he says, ' Let that be a valid Eucharist which is under the bishop, or one to whom he shall have entrusted it. . . . It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize [or to offer or to present sacrifice] or to celebrate a Love-feast.' The passage, as Bishop Lightfoot says, seems to ' describe the two most important functions in which a bishop could have part,' i.e. the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Certainly it is the easiest interpretation of the passage to consider that ἀγάπην ποιεῖν includes both the Agape and the Eucharist, which seem to have been joined together in Ignatius's time.

Some minor critical questions are involved in the

[1] Zahn says the reference is to the Agape; Lightfoot says not.

passage just quoted from the Epistle to the Smyrnaeans. There is first of all the question of the authenticity of the Epistle, but this is fairly well agreed upon to-day. There is further the fact that the words in brackets are a late gloss found on the passage.[1] The longer version of the Epistle containing the gloss is evidently from the fourth century, and it appears to have arisen at a time and in a district where the Love-feasts and the Eucharist were separate; but in the period A.D. 110–120, at Antioch, the Epistle gives sufficient reason to believe that the two services were united in one celebration.

Ignatius appears to have disliked the junction of the Agape and the Eucharist when he gave instructions that no such meeting should be held without the authority of the bishop. This seems to have been the beginning of the distrust in which the Love-feast was held at a later period.

We can fix approximately the date as regards Asia Minor when the Agape and the Eucharist became separated. In the time of Ignatius they seem to have been associated, but a generation later the separation seems to have taken place. The

[1] The text of the gloss is, Οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε προσφέρειν οὔτε θυσίαν προσκομίζειν οὔτε δοχὴν ἐπιτελεῖν. The interpolator evidently wants to bring the letter up to date as regards the fourth century. At that period δοχή was frequently used for ἀγάπη. See Lightfoot, i. 400 ff. and ii. 307–313.

evidence of this fact is, however, only circumstantial. Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 65–67) gives a considerable and detailed account of the Eucharist, but does not refer to the Agape.[1] Now Justin wrote about the year 155 (he died about A.D. 165), and though he wrote at Rome (probably) he was an Asiatic, and had spent the better part of his life in the East. Therefore we may safely take his evidence as representing the state of usage in Asia a full generation later than Ignatius. His evidence, however, is negative, and Batiffol thinks that this silence implies the non-existence of the Love-feast. That position is untenable in light of other facts. Indeed, the proper explanation for the silence of Justin is that the Eucharist was in his time a separate ceremony from the Agape, and that while he was led to write about the former, he was not in the least interested to describe the latter.

We know that a century later the two ceremonies were irremediably separated. It is, therefore, a safe conjecture that the separation, while taking place at different times in different localities, passed through its critical period in the years between 120 and 160 in the west of Asia Minor. We may substantiate this conclusion by reference to another Asiatic document, which dates from about A.D. 160,

[1] The references quoted by Keating, pp. 59, 60, are too remote to prove anything.

viz. the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla.* In this booklet there is a description of a meal which is almost certainly an Agape (chapters xxiii.–xxv.) :

'And Paul was fasting with Onesiphorus and his wife and children in a new tomb[1] as they were going from Iconium to Daphne ; and there was within the tomb a great Agape (?)[2] ; and when many days were past, the fasting children said to Paul, "We are hungry, and we cannot buy loaves," . . . and Paul having taken off his cloak, said, "Go, my child, and buy more loaves," . . . and they had five loaves, and herbs and water, and they rejoiced in the holy works of Christ.'

It is only right to add that in the uncertain state of the text the use of the name 'Agape' cannot be pressed into the passage, though the meal, with its salt and vegetables and water and bread, appears to have been an Agape. We have, therefore, here a description of an Agape which was not only separated from the Eucharist, but which was held in a spot quite apart from the ecclesiastical surroundings of the sacrament.

[1] The Armenian text of the *Acts* reads 'house' instead of 'tomb. We cannot suggest any parallel between this and the funeral agapae of a later date, or even the catacomb agapae, which will be described in a later chapter.

[2] The Greek text is, ἦν ἔσω ἐν τῷ μνημείῳ ἀγάπη πολλή. The Latin text gives for the last two words, 'gaudium magnum.'

VI

THE AGAPE IN EUROPE IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

The earliest evidence for the existence of the Agape on the Continent of Europe is the reference to the common meal in 1 Corinthians. That reference is of considerable importance, as exhibiting the first occasion on which the problem of the Christian's relation to heathen clubs was brought into prominence.

Long before Christianity came to Corinth, common meals with a religious basis must have been well known. Corinth was a great business centre, and contained many merchant guilds; it also had among its inhabitants many foreigners, who would naturally form national societies for the purposes of mutual help, intercourse, and enjoyment. Such clubs, we may be sure, would have a religious

character, worshipping some deity of their own country. Sir W. Ramsay points out[1] that 'at Puteoli the Syrians from Berytus met in the worship of a god whom they called in Latin Jupiter, but who was undoubtedly a Syrian god called by a Latin name,' and he adds, 'There must have been many such societies at Corinth.'

Unfortunately there is a great lack of epigraphic memorials of the life of Corinth from this particular period, and Dr. Liebarth[2] has been unable to find reference to any club in Corinth except in a passage of Suidas. But it was in such trading centres as Corinth, with its two harbours, that associations flourished most in the ancient world.

Now most of the citizens connected with trades would likely belong to one or more clubs, and they would be certain to have paid in the subscriptions which were essential to membership, and were a regular feature of such associations. Now that they had become Christians, was it necessary for them to cut adrift from their trading guilds and social clubs? If so, what about their subscriptions? Must they give up their rights to all insurance against sickness, and lose all funeral benefit? Yet, on the other hand, how could they feast at heathen banquets with an easy conscience? For the

[1] In *Expositor* for 1900, p. 429, &c.

[2] *Das griechische Vereinswesen*, Leipzig, 1896.

'central point in the ceremonial that bound together the members of those Greek associations or clubs was the common meal, and specially the common cup. "I have eaten out of the holy dish, I have drunk from the sacred cup,"[1] was the formula pronounced by each participator in the mysteries which may be taken as typical of the whole class of associations.'[2]

Not only was there 'idol meat' used at these feasts, but the case was more serious, seeing that the whole banquet was 'regarded not merely as the eating of food in common, but as an act involving real conveyance of power. To take an illustration, the belief has always been widespread and strong in the East that the stranger who succeeds in entering (even by craft and stealth) within the circle of the family religion and partaking of the family meal becomes to such a degree part of the family that his person is sacred to all its members. He must not be injured by them; and though he may have slain one of their number previously, yet revenge must give way to the bond which now unites him to the family.' For a Christian to continue a member of a heathen guild was, therefore, a most serious matter. It involved him in the closest possible relations and responsibilities with paganism.

[1] *ἐκ τυμπάνου βέβρωκα, ἐκ κυμβάλου πέπωκα.* Cf. Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.

[2] Quoted from Ramsay, as above.

How St. Paul answered these questions, and with what tact and firmness he handled the whole situation, does not pertain to our present argument. All that we need to emphasize is that either by the initiation of St. Paul or some of his colleagues the Christian Agape was established in Corinth and immediately began to get adrift.

The next important piece of evidence for the Agape in Europe comes from documents pertaining to church ordinances—the *Didascalia* and the *Canons* of Hippolytus; but as the consideration of these is being reserved for a special chapter, the mention of them is all that is necessary at this point.

It is a little strange that several early Church authors do not touch on the matter of the Agape at all, even where in some cases one would expect them to do so. The *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* do not come within reach of the subject The Epistles of Clement of Rome do not touch the matter. This is all the more extraordinary in view of the fact that in chapter xl. of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians the whole subject of church order is considered. Clement says, ' (God) has enjoined offerings to be presented, and service to be performed, and that not thoughtlessly nor irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours.' He adds, in chapter xliv., ' Our sins will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those presbyters who

have blamelessly and holily presented the offerings (τὰ δῶρα).' If this mention of offerings can be construed to refer to the Agape, joined to the Eucharist, as Lightfoot thought it did, then we have here some mention of the Agape dating possibly from the year 95–96. The reference, however, is too indistinct to be of any value.

One of the earliest of the Roman Apologists was Minucius Felix. Lightfoot puts his date at about A.D. 160. His work, called *Octavius*, was written in Latin, and in the charming introduction of the book it is interesting to see how a Christian lawyer of the second century could occupy his leisure hours in literary work on behalf of Christianity. His chief concern is to answer the slanders of one Caecilius Natalis, who had blackguarded the Christians and their Love-feasts.

The whole passage, as given by Minucius Felix (*Octavius*, viii. and ix.) from Caecilius, is as follows :

'On a solemn day they assemble at the feast with all their children, sisters, mothers, people of every sex and of every age. There, after much feasting, when the fellowship has grown warm, and the fire of incestuous lust has grown hot with drunkenness, a dog that has been tied to the chandelier is provoked, by throwing a small piece of offal beyond the length of a line by which he is bound, to rush and spring; and thus the

conscious light being overturned and extinguished, in the shameless darkness the connexions of abominable lust involve them.'[1]

Another purveyor of the same sort of tale was answered by Minucius. He was a writer called Fronto of Cirta, who was the tutor of Marcus Aurelius, and lent his authority to the same vulgar libel on the Christian Agape (*c.* 150–160). Minucius says:

'And concerning the (Christian) feast, it is notorious, for they are held everywhere. Even the oration of our friend from Cirta is a witness. On an appointed day, they gather together for a feast . . . and regarding the incest that they say takes place at our gathering they have a tremendous tale to tell . . . and your friend Fronto tells it not as a witness who has testimony to offer, but as an orator who has an insult to fling at us.'

To these charges Minucius Felix replies (xxxi. 5):

'We hold our feast (*colimus convivia*) not only modestly (*pudica*) but soberly also. We have no desire for luxurious banquets (*epulae*), neither do we protract the feast by (delivering ourselves

[1] It is quite easy to understand how the story arose that in the Eucharist the Christians used to eat a child, but I cannot find any explanation of the dog and chandelier slander except it be that when the Christians spoke of their *aniculae* the pagans took it up wrongly to be *caniculae*.

up to the pleasures of) strong drink, but we temper our rejoicings with a seriousness (*hilaritas cum gravitate*), a chaste conversation, and a body still more chaste.'

This accusation and the reply to it clearly show the existence of the Agape in Rome in the middle of the second century. The form of slander that was usually flung against the Eucharist was that the Christians were eaters of children, a slander that had its origin in the Christian language about eating the Body and the Blood of Christ. When, however, Minucius speaks of 'epulae' and 'convivium' he has clearly the Love-feast in view. The quantity of wine used at the Eucharist was never sufficiently great to produce even the suspicion of disorder, and the Christian joy felt by believers at the Holy Table would never be described as 'hilaritas cum gravitate.' Further, Minucius says that during the feast referred to there was a 'chaste conversation' (*casto sermone*), but so far as we know this could not possibly have reference to any part of the ritual of the sacrament. While, then, this passage from Minucius Felix gives us a distinct reference to the Agape at Rome in the middle of the second century, unfortunately it does not afford us ground to decide whether the Eucharist and the Agape were conjoined in the ceremonies that came within the scope of the knowledge of the Roman lawyer.

Among the many Apologies for Christianity that have come down from these centuries, there is one written in Greek, *The Epistle to Diognetus*, which appears to have emanated from a church in Greece. It used to be ascribed to Justin Martyr; this is quite discredited now, but it is considered to belong to the second century; Lightfoot puts it at about A.D. 170. In chapter v. the author deals with the conduct of Christians, and says, 'They have a common table, but not a common bed' (*τράπεζαν κοινὴν παρατίθενται ἀλλ' οὐ κοίτην*).[1] The reference, of course, is again to the well-worn pagan slander against the Christians.

Somewhat interesting evidence for the Agape comes from the satires of Lucian, who wrote about A.D. 167–170. In the *De Morte Peregrini* (chapter xii.) the story is told of the imprisonment of Peregrinus, *alias* Proteus, a name not inappropriate, as Lightfoot says, to one who was all things by turns. Among other abnormal crimes he had murdered his father. When the murder came to light, he escaped and wandered from land to land. During his wanderings he fell in with the Christians whom he described. Eventually, according to Lucian's tale, he immolated himself by fire at the Olympian Games. Lucian says that when Peregrinus was in prison on the

[1] For *κοίτην* there is a V.L. *κονίην* (?), 'They have a common though not unclean table.'

charge of being a Christian, 'from dawn one might easily see near the prison old women, widows, and orphan children. Those who were well-to-do among them bribed the jailers and spent the night inside the prison with him. Various meals were brought in, and sacred formularies were recited, and our friend Peregrinus, for such was his name, was termed by them "the new Socrates."' Of course, if this story had stood alone we should have considerable hesitancy in asserting that there was a definite reference to the Agape in it. But with the knowledge from Tertullian and others that a special function of the Agape was to provide food for Christians in prison for their faith, we can have no doubt whatever that the reference is to the Agape.[1]

In the *Acts* of Pionius, which were written about A.D. 250, we have an account of what appears to have been a Saturday Agape with solemn prayer, 'Facta ergo oratione solemni cum die sabbato sanctum panem et aquam degustavissent.' The bread and water show that the meal could not have been a Eucharist.

While quoting from Apocryphal Acts, there are some similar writings that may be quoted, though it is not at all certain that they are of European origin.

In the *Acts* of the Apostle Thomas, which were

[1] Lightfoot, op. cit., vol. i., pp. 130–140.

written about 220,[1] there is a passage that possibly refers to the Agape. We are told that the apostle, after preaching to men, women, and children, 'having blessed them, took bread and oil and herbs and salt, and gave them to eat. But he continued in his fasting, for the Lord's day was about to dawn.'

In the *Acts* of James and Marianus, which date from about A.D. 260, a description is given of the heavenly banquet prepared for those who have passed the test of martyrdom. This banquet is spoken of as a sort of heavenly Agape.

Before closing this chapter there is a further series of references to the Agape to be found in the Sibylline Oracles. These Oracles are a collection of apocalyptic writings composed in imitation of the heathen Sibylline books. The origin of them is obscure. Some are written by Jews and some by Christians, and the aim is apparently to win the heathen over to faith in God. Hexameter verse is used, and to give an air of antiquity, Homeric language is employed. They profess to have been written by the daughters-in-law of Noah! The Oracles are very numerous, and have quite swamped the older classical oracles.[2] Alexandre supposes that the eighth book, from which the references

[1] See Ante-Nicene Library Translation, p. 405.

[2] See Alexandre's edition, 1869. Annotated English edition by H. C. O. Lanchester, 1910.

to the Agape come, was written by a Christian hand in the end of the third century. As there is not much information to be gained from the passages, one will suffice for quotation :

> With bounteous love-feasts, and generous expedients,
> With soothing psalms and Godlike strains,
> Thee we are called to extol, Thee, the Immortal
> and True,
> Thee, God the Father of all.

VII

THE AGAPE IN AFRICA IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

The Agape took a firm hold in the African Churches sooner than in the European Churches, and signs of decadence also appeared in Africa at an early period.

Clement of Alexandria claims attention first. He was born between A.D. 150 and 160, and died somewhere about A.D. 220. He was a good Greek scholar, was for a time teacher of Origen, and has been known as the Father of Greek Theology. His works teem with references to the Agape. One of his writings, *The Instructor* (ὁ Παιδαγωγός), is a practical manual for young converts, giving rules for the proper conduct of life over against the prevailing immorality of heathen life. The first chapter of the second book treats of food, and mention is naturally made of the fact that in Alexandria the Christians

held common meals under the title of Agape. Already these feasts had begun to show abuses, and Clement, who is something of a Puritan, rouses himself in the name of the gospel against evil usages. A couple of quotations will be sufficient:

> 'These feasts serve to maintain a carnal and wicked life, though there are those who dare to call them Agapae, abusing words most brazenly.'
>
> 'They dare to apply the name "Agape" to pitiful suppers (δειπνάρια) redolent of savour and sauces, and to profane with feasts of this kind the holy Love (?) which is the beautiful and salutary work of the Logos.'

And again playing on the double meaning of the word 'Agape,' he says:

> 'Love (?) is a celestial food, a feast of the spirit (ἑστίασις λογική). . . . Love ought not to consist of a feast, but the feast ought to rest on the Love.'

Again, in *Paidag.* (ii. 1) Clement speaks with disapprobation of 'little meals at which there is an odour of roast meats and sauces,' and laments that 'the excellent and salutary institution of the Logos, the common meal, is disgraced with overturned platters.' He does not therefore condemn or reject the Agape, but demands that 'the meals

should be simple and frugal.' He is also convinced that the Agape ' is an excellent nurse for public spirit where contentment thereat is as an abundantly filled poor-box.'

There is much more writing of this character but as it is homiletic rather than apologetic it does not give additional information. Clement is quite clear, however, on the existence of the Agape at Alexandria. His chief contention is that he does not like the abstract word ' Love ' used as the name of a feast. Love for him is a spiritual thing, which needs to be practised on earth, and will burst into bloom in heaven. Neither does he like the fact that psalms and hymns and spiritual songs were giving place to secular and meretricious music in the Agape. With curious inconsequence, he does not object to harps and lyres, but draws the line at the use of flutes! It is of some interest to think that the ' music question ' in the Church first arose in connexion with the Agape at Alexandria (*Paed.* ii. 5).

Some years later Clement wrote a sort of sequel to the *Paidagogos*, and modestly called it *Stromata*, or ' Patchwork.' The name sufficiently indicates the character of the work. It is without methodical arrangement, consisting of a heterogeneous mixture of science, theology, poetry, and philosophy, and is a guide to the deeper knowledge of Christianity. Its full title as given by Eusebius is Titus Flavius

Clement's *Stromata of Gnostic Notes on the True Philosophy.*

In chapter ii. of Book iii. of this work the author sets himself to refute a certain error of Carpocrates.[1] Amongst other things he describes the banquets of the Carpocratians: 'For I would not like to call their gathering "Agape." Men and women at the same time, after having been well fed, give themselves up to every sort of disgrace, and these abuses take place in a so-called Agape.'

The passage is interesting because it shows that the Agape was a sufficiently essential part of Christian usage to be incorporated in the usages of a heretical sect.

Clement's testimony must come up again for consideration when we come to examine how the Agape got separated from the Eucharist.

The want of definiteness in Clement is more than made up by the splendid fullness of treatment given to the Agape by his contemporary Tertullian.

In passing from Clement of Alexandria to Tertullian of Carthage, we are not coming to a later period of history, but to a different portion of the African Church—so different, indeed, that they seem as if they were not in the same continent.

[1] Carpocrates was one of the earliest of the Gnostics. Tertullian (*De Anima*, 35) calls him a magician and a fornicator. The immorality of his followers was proverbial.

All the affinities of Alexandria were with the Eastern or Greek-speaking Church, all the affinities of Carthaginian Christianity were with the Latin-speaking Churches in fellowship with the strong bishopric of Rome. The travel links between North Africa and East Africa ran through Europe rather than through Africa. Nevertheless there is a considerable justification for keeping Tertullian (and Cyprian in the next century) in this geographical division; and the African Church was as much a unity in the second century, even if Carthage and Alexandria went their own ways for the most part, as the Roman or the Eastern Churches were unities. It was only in a later century that it could be truly said that the Universal Church was clearly divided into East and West.

In Tertullian we have to distinguish between the orthodox writings and his writings after he had become a Montanist. He was born probably about A.D. 157, and became a Christian about A.D. 192. He turned to Montanism about A.D. 202, and died about A.D. 235. He had a lawyer's education and training, and was a careful, strong controversialist. He is 'the most human of the Fathers, keen, witty, sarcastic, argumentative, morally intense, intellectually extreme, capable of love and wrath and scorn, and, in the midst of his strong assertions and high moral imperatives, a lowly man, conscious of his

own sin and ashamed. His must have been a notable mass of Christian manhood.'[1]

There is a passage in the *Apology* of Tertullian[2] which is the great *locus classicus* in patristic literature for the Agape usages:

'I will now set forth on my part the practices of the Christian society (*factionis*), that since I have disproved that which is evil I may show somewhat that is good, if so be. I have also unfolded the truth. We are a body (*corpus*) formed by our joint cognizance of Religion (*conscientia religionis*), by the unity of Discipline, by the bond of Hope. We come together in a meeting and a congregation as before God, as though we would in one body (*manu facta*) sue Him by our prayers. This violence is pleasing unto God. We pray also for Emperors, for their ministers and the powers, for the condition of the world, for the quiet of all things, for *the delaying of the End*.[3] We come together to call the sacred writings to remembrance, if so be that the character of the present times compel us either to use admonition or recollection in anything. In any case, by these holy words we feed our faith, raise our hopes, establish our confidence, nor do we the less strengthen our discipline by inculcating precepts. Here, too,

[1] Rainy, *The Ancient Catholic Church*, p. 189.

[2] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, chapter xxxix.

[3] Because, as he points out in chapter xxxii., they desire that the Roman Emperors should have time for repentance.

are exercised exhortations, corrections, and godly censure. For our judgement also cometh with great weight as of men well assured that they are under the eye of God, and it is a very grave forestalling of judgement to come if any such be so offended as to be put out of the communion of prayer.

'Of the solemn assembly, and of all holy fellowship, the most approved *Elders* preside over us, having obtained this honour not by money, but by character, for which money nothing pertaining unto God is purchased. Even if there be with us a sort of treasury, no sum is therein collected discreditable to religion, as though she were bought. Every man placeth there a small gift on one day of each month, or whensoever he will, so he do but will, and so he be but able, for no man is constrained, but contributeth willingly. These are, as it were, the deposits of piety, for afterwards they are not disbursed in feasting and in drinking, and in disgusting haunts of gluttony, but for feeding and burying the poor, for boys and girls without money and without parents, and for old men now house-ridden, for the shipwrecked also, and for any who in the mines or in the islands or in the prisons become their creed's pensioners, so that it be only for the sake of the way of God. But it is the exercise of this sort of Love which doth with some chiefly brand us with a mark of evil. "See," say they, "how they love each other," for they themselves hate each other; "and see how ready

they are to die for each other," for they themselves are more ready to slay each other. . . .

'Our feast showeth its nature in its name. It is named by the word by which Love is among the Greeks. Whatever expense it costeth, expense incurred in the name of piety is a gain. If we aid every poor man by this refreshment, not according as the parasites among you aspire to the glory of enslaving their liberty and for their hire, filling their bellies in the midst of insults, but according, as with God, more thought is taken for men of low degree; if the cause of the feast be good, judge ye what the rest of the course of our rules is according to the duties of religion. It alloweth nothing vile, nothing immodest. Men sit not down to meat before tasting in the first place of prayer to God. They eat as much as hungry men desire. They drink as much as is profitable for chaste men. They are so filled as men who remember that during the night also they must pray to God. They so discourse as those that know that God heareth. After that water for the hands and lights are brought. According as each is able out of the Holy Scriptures or of his own mind he is called upon to sing publicly to God. Hence it is proved in what degree he hath drunken. In like manner prayer breaks up the feast. Thence they separate, not unto bands for violence,[1] nor into groups for running to and fro, nor for the outbreakings of lasciviousness, but to be as chary as before of modesty and chastity as men

[1] Cf. Juvenal, iii. 278.

who have fed not so much upon meats as upon instructions upon righteousness. This coming together of Christians would deservedly be unlawful if it were like those things which are unlawful, deservedly to be condemned if it were not at variance with those things which are to be condemned. If any complain of it on the ground that factious parties are complained of, for whose hurt have we at any time assembled? We are the same when gathered together as when scattered, the same in the mass as single, offending no one, vexing no one. When the honest, the good, the pious, the chaste, come together, it must not be called a faction but a court.'[1]

It is perfectly clear that this passage refers to the Agape.

1. Certainly it refers to a real meal. Tertullian has just been speaking in eloquent terms of the charity of Christian people and the inferiority of pagan people in this same regard. He recognizes that a usual slander against these common meals was made by the pagan people on the score of prodigality and indecency. He wants to know why these accusers have their eyes shut to the debaucheries of their own social meetings and have them so widely open to the feasts of the Christians. Then follows immediately the description of the

[1] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, xxxix., translated by the Rev. C. L. Dodgson, M.A., in 'The Library of the Fathers.'

Christian feast of which we have just given a translation. Batiffol suggested that this passage refers to the Eucharist, but any one reading the whole narrative will see that Tertullian's reference to the *Triclinia* and his use of ' discumbere,' ' coenula,' and kindred expressions can only refer to a plain and real meal.

2. We know a good deal of the method of service adopted by the early Church in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The usual order of service in the sacrament was as follows : First came the reading of the Scripture, followed by preaching. Then came the liturgical prayers, followed by the partaking of the bread and wine. The meal described by Tertullian had a totally different order. It began with a prayer, after which came the supper. Now if there had been a sacramental element in the proceedings, Tertullian is not the writer to pass it over in silence. The very nature of his *Apology* made it essential that he should insist on the liturgical element if it had been present. He would not have spoken almost casually of the prayer if it had been part of a church liturgy. Indeed, there is not a single word in the whole passage which makes one think of the Eucharist. It contains only expressions which we would employ in reference to a meal in a Christian home or amongst Christian people.

3. There is even more than this, because there seem to be assertions which distinctly exclude all

idea of a sacrament. By any possibility could one say of the sacrament, 'We eat as much as hungry men desire to eat; we drink as much as is right for chaste people to drink'? Was the Eucharist ever a place where one went to appease hunger or satisfy thirst? Could any writer describing its service speak of 'conversations' as of a procedure quite usual and quite natural, and then add the restriction that Christians ought to remember the presence of their Lord, who listens while they speak?

4. After the feast they washed their hands. According to Tertullian (*De Oratione*, chapter xiii.), the early Christians used to wash their hands before praying. The Apostolic Constitutions (vii. 11) likewise prescribe the washing of the hands before the celebration of the Eucharist, but that washing of the hands did not take place at the same point where it is described in the passage before us.

5. After washing the hands they lit the lights. That act apparently took place as darkness came down, for it was in the evening that Agapae were held. This is settled by the phrase which says that they did not forget to worship God during the night. The Eucharist, on the other hand, was usually celebrated in the morning.[1]

[1] Tertullian lays stress on the lights for the special purpose of contradicting the pagan slanders regarding indecent and lustful behaviour at the Agape. Cf. *De Cor. Mil.* 3, 'Etiam antelucanis coetibus'· *De Fuga in Persec.* 14.

6. After the hand-washing and the lights, some assistants sang sacred songs taken from the Scriptures, songs which they themselves had composed. Then came prayer, and the ceremony was at an end. Certainly these details do not fit in well with any form of Eucharist celebration.

In the seventh chapter of the *Apology*, Tertullian speaks of the slanders that the pagans had published against the Christians: 'It is commonly reported that we are the most base of mankind, for it is said that we have a mysterious (ceremony) in which we kill and eat a child, with incest after the banquet, and that we have dogs which upset the lights,' &c. Here the first accusation is levelled against the Eucharist, and the second against the Agape.

An interesting reference to the Eucharist occurs in Tertullian's small tractate *Ad Uxorem*, which shows that the Agape and the Eucharist were not held at the same time, but that already fasting communion and the early morning celebrations had become usual. Tertullian is discussing the special difficulties of a Christian woman who has been married to a heathen husband, and he asks, 'What husband would allow his wife to spend her nights at meetings, and would be satisfied to let her go from his side? He will want to know what food it is you take in secret before you eat any other food. Will he be satisfied when you are absent all night at

the Easter festival? Will he not be suspicious at your going to the Lord's Supper (*convivium dominicum*), especially since it is so much defamed?'

Of the other numerous references in Tertullian's writings to the Agape there is no need to make more lengthened quotation. Two further passages will be quite sufficient. The first is from the treatise *Ad Martyres* (chapter ii.), where we have a reference very like what we also find in the *Acts* of Perpetua and in Lucian. Tertullian is speaking of Christians in prison, and he says that the spirit and the flesh do not lose anything by being put into prison, 'by reason of the care of the Church and the Agape of the brethren' (*agapen fratrum*, not *amorem fratrum*). It is sometimes contended that Tertullian is merely speaking of the consolations that come to the imprisoned Christians through the love of his fellow worshippers. The fact, however, that he turns aside to the Greek word instead of using an ordinary Latin word seems to show that he is referring to the technical rather than the abstract Agape, and that he is referring to food set apart at the Agapae for brethren in prison. What may be regarded as an interesting confirmation of this fact is to be found in the apocryphal story known as the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, which must have been written about the end of the second century. This little tract tells us that it was the custom on the night

before a gladiatorial combat to accord to those who had to fight with the wild beasts on the morrow a 'free meal' of whatever character and amount they desired. It was apparently the same sort of last consolation that is to-day accorded by British usage to a murderer the evening before his execution. It was thus done on the evening of March 6, A.D. 203, at the prison in Carthage. To the martyrs of the next day, Perpetua and Felicitas and their companions, the authorities had given a free meal. This meal, we are told, they converted as far as possible into an Agape ('Quantum in ipsis erat non coenam liberam sed agapen coenarent').

When we come to examine the arrangements of time and place of the Agape, we shall have to refer again to the evidence of Tertullian on these particulars. It is quite sufficient, however, to summarize the matter here by saying that in Carthage in the time of Tertullian the Agape and the Eucharist were held separately. The Agape followed on the conclusion of the ordinary worship of the church, and was held in the afternoon or early evening. The Eucharist was held in the early morning, and had already begun to be received fasting.

We may now pass to our last quotation from Tertullian.[1]

[1] Other references in Tertullian are *De Corona C.* iii. (see Keating, pp. 70–73); *De Fuga in Persec.* 14; *De Cultu Foeminarum*, ii. 11.

A saddening allusion to the Agape is found in his *De Jejunio* (chapter xvii.). This is one of the works of Tertullian written after he had severed himself from the orthodox Church and joined the Montanists. The treatise is addressed to the Catholic Church, and reproaches it in almost violent terms regarding the Agape. He says to them :

> 'With you, love (ἀγάπη) grows warm in the saucepans, faith glows in the kitchen, hope resides in the plates ; but "the greatest of these is love" (ἀγάπη) ; because through it your young men sleep with the sisters : the sequel to your gluttony apparently is lust joined to luxury' ('Quia per hanc adolescentes tui cum sororibus dormiunt ; appendices scilicet gulae lascivia atque luxuria').

There is no doubt that it is the Agape of which he is speaking, but there is considerable doubt how far he is telling the strict truth. His new-found zeal as a Montanist has made him intolerant of anything that seems to give scope for laxity, and perhaps he is not a little glad to find an opportunity of whipping the Church from which he has apostasized. Of one thing we may be fairly sure, there is very little likelihood that the Agape was ever an occasion for the young men 'dormire cum sororibus.'

From Carthage we may return to Alexandria, and see what the great patristic scholar Origen had to

say about the Agape. He was born about the year A.D. 185, and continued till past middle life in Alexandria. In his later years he lived in Caesarea and Tyre, and died in A.D. 254. In Origen's monumental works there are very few references to the Agape. In the Commentary on Job which is ascribed to him, there is a passage which we shall deal with later when we come to inquire into the funeral Agapae. In his Commentary on the Romans, Keating sees a reference to the Agape in the exposition of chapter xvi. 16 (Keating, p. 99). It is, however, very far from being a clear case. Two passages from the *Contra Celsum* are much more to the point. These, however, emanate more from the antagonist Celsus than from Origen himself. This creates a slight difficulty, for we do not know the date of Celsus, and we do not know from what locality he drew his information. The limits of the date seem to be between A.D. 150 and 200; and while there is some uncertainty on the matter, it is fairly probable that Celsus wrote in Alexandria.

In the opening sentences of the *Contra Celsum* the Agape is mentioned. Celsus accused the Christians 'that they conduct secretly meetings among themselves, though they are contrary to the laws . . . and his desire is to slander what is called the Agape of the Christians among themselves, as taking its origin from the common peril, and having

a power that transcends oaths.'[1] At first sight it appears as if ἀγάπη here must mean 'love,' since it is followed by πρὸς ἀλλήλους. The whole context, however, makes it clear that Celsus referred to the Agape, and suggested that the Christians took advantage of the imperial laws regarding Collegia to protect their own worship.[2] This is a point of considerable interest, and will be dealt with in the chapter on 'The Agape and Imperial Policy' (chapter x.).

Travelling westward again to the same province of Northern Africa as was associated with Tertullian, but a full generation later, we find Cyprian referring to the Agape. There is now no doubt that the Agape and the Eucharist were separated.

In his letter to Caecilius (*c.* A.D. 253) Cyprian argues that the custom of celebrating the Eucharist in the morning is a fit and proper one, seeing that Christ rose from the dead in the morning and not in the evening, and His resurrection was the culmination of His atonement, which is the central thought of the Eucharist. Therefore he is concerned lest the

[1] ὡς συνθήκας κρύβδην πρὸς ἀλλήλους ποιουμένων παρὰ τὰ νενομισμένα . . . καὶ βούλεται διαβαλεῖν τὴν καλουμένην ἀγάπην χριστιάνων πρὸς ἀλλήλους (ὡς) ἀπὸ τοῦ κοινοῦ κινδύνου ὑφισταμένην καὶ δυναμένην ὑπερόρκια. See Patrick, *The Apology of Origen in reply to Celsus.*

[2] Origen, for instance, replies that 'if a man were placed among Scythians whose laws were unholy . . . and having no opportunity of escape were compelled to live among them, such an one would with good reason enter into associations contrary to their laws.'

sacrament should be held after supper, as apparently some must have been arguing from the analogy of the Last Supper and its common meal.

In his Epistle to Donatus (16) Cyprian says :

> ' Whatever is left of the daytime let us now spend gladly. Let the sober meal resound with psalms. . . . You will provide a better entertainment for your dearest friends if, while we have something spiritual to listen to, religious music soothes our ears.'

There is a somewhat uncertain reference to the Agape in Cyprian's *Treatise on the Lapsed*. He takes occasion to denounce unfaithful bishops, who, ' despising their divine charge, become agents in secular business, forsake their throne, desert their people, wander about over foreign provinces, hunt the markets for gainful merchandise, but do not assist while brethren were starving in the church.' The last phrase of this excerpt, ' non subvenire esurientibus in ecclesia fratribus,' is ambiguous in structure. Keating translates it, ' Bring no aid to starving brethren in the church.' The possibility that it contains a reference to the Agape is somewhat remote, and, worse still, the very phrase itself is a doubtful reading of the passage.

But we have given enough quotations to make it clear that in the Western Churches of North

Africa in the third century the Agape was still in existence. It was, however, completely separated from the Eucharist, partly because of its incongruity with the solemn sacrament, and partly because it remained an evening meal, while the Eucharist was distinctly a morning celebration. Of the decadence and death of the Agape we will see evidence in a later chapter.

VIII

THE AGAPE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY AND AFTER: EASTERN CHRISTENDOM

When we turn to the evidence of the fourth and succeeding centuries, the existence and history of the Agape are quite clearly marked. Omitting the Church Orders, which necessitate a chapter to themselves, the historians, apologists, and homilists of these centuries have a great deal to say about the Agape. For several reasons it is convenient to divide them up into Eastern and Western witnesses. This, of course, is in no sense a mere geographical distinction, for the two divisions of the Church in the fourth century were beginning to differ and drift apart from one another on many points. Eventually their divergences, which at first were largely temperamental and geographical, became

hardened down into a real schism over the great 'filioque' discussion.[1]

Perhaps the most representative writer of the period and of the Eastern provinces of the Church was Chrysostom.

Chrysostom (A.D. 347 (?) to 407) lived a large part of his life in Antioch, and the remainder in Constantinople and in exile in the Taurus Mountains. His witness to Agape usages, therefore, deals with the usages in the Asian and East African Churches. In his Homily (xxiv.) on Romans xiii., he has occasion to refer to the words, 'and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' After a vigorous denunciation of drunkenness he proceeds :

'And in saying this I do not forbid your meeting together or taking your suppers at a common table, but to prevent your behaving unseemly. . . . Let the Gentiles (Ἕλληνες) see that Christians know best how to indulge, and to indulge in an orderly way. For it says, "Rejoice in the Lord with trembling" (Ps. ii. 11). But how then can one rejoice? Why, by singing hymns, making prayers, introducing psalms in the place of those low songs. Thus will Christ also be at our table, and will fill the whole feast with blessing. When thou prayest, when thou singest spiritual songs, when thou invitest the poor to partake of what is set before

[1] See Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, p. 142.

thee, when thou settest much orderliness and temperance over the feast, so thou wilt make the party a church by hymns in the room of ill-timed shouts and cheers. And tell me not that another custom has come to prevail. But correct what is thus amiss. "For whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). For from banquets of that sort you have evil desires and impurities, and wives come to be in disrepute, and harlots in honour among you. Hence come the upsetting of families, and evils unnumbered, and all things are turned upside down, and ye have left the pure fountain, and run to the conduit of mire.'

From this stirring homily we can see that in Antioch, where it was delivered, the Agape was fallen on evil days, but that nevertheless there was no notion that it should be ended. Rather it needed purifying.

By far the most important piece of evidence given by Chrysostom is contained in his twenty-seventh Homily (on 1 Cor. xi. 17), where he deals with St. Paul's condemnation of the abuses of the common meal at Corinth. He says:

'As in the case of the three thousand who believed in the beginning, all had eaten their meals in common, and had all things in common, such was also the practice at the time when the apostle

wrote thus. Not such indeed exactly, but as it were a certain outflowing of that communion (κοινωνία) . . . and because, of course, some were poor and others rich, they laid not down all their goods in the midst, but made tables open on stated days, as it should seem, and when the solemn service (συνάξις) was completed, *after the communion of the Mysteries* they all went to a common entertainment, the rich bringing their provisions with them and the poor and destitute being invited by them, and all feasting in common. But afterwards this custom also became corrupt, and the reason was their being divided, and addicting themselves, some to this party, and some to that. . . . Since, therefore, this custom was broken through, a custom most excellent and most useful, for it was a foundation of love, and a comfort to poverty, and a corrective of riches, and an occasion of the highest philosophy, and an instruction of humility . . . St. Paul says, " Now in this I praise you not." '[1]

At the first glance we seem to have here a clear statement that the Agape and Eucharist were combined, and that the Eucharist came first. But the question is not so easily settled. The quotation does not profess to give information about usages in St. Chrysostom's time; the past tense is used throughout, and we are quite in the dark what

[1] From Pusey's edition in ' The Library of the Fathers.'

amount of evidential value to set on the statement. The tone is that of a man engaged in an historical research, and not altogether happy in his search. There is no doubt whatever about the order of things in the original institution of the Holy Sacrament, for the Gospels are clear on the point that the Last Supper was drawing to a conclusion when Jesus caused it to culminate in the solemn act of the Sacrament. Did Chrysostom forget this? It may be that he knew of localities in Asia where the opposite order reigned, and it is always a possibility that he knew of no other order, by some strange chance. But reading the passage in the light of his usual sermonizing style, one cannot help noticing his almost mild language. There is not his usual downright thumping at abuses, and altogether we get the impression that the writer was talking of something of which he was not at all sure.[1]

One further citation from St. Chrysostom's Homilies may be made here. In Homily xxii. he says, talking of the having all things in common:

> 'From this law and custom there arose, then, another admirable custom in the churches. For when all the faithful met together after hearing the instruction, *and after the prayers and communion*

[1] There is just a possibility that Chrysostom means to imply that the Eucharist was celebrated in the early morning and the Agape later on in the same day. If so, his language is not well chosen.

of the Mysteries, they did not immediately return home on the breaking up of the assembly, but the rich and wealthy brought meat from their own houses, and called the poor and made common tables, common dinners, common banquets in the church itself.'

In this passage, too, we find the same description of the Eucharist as coming first, and the Agape concluding the ceremony; so that there is no mere misinterpretation of the author's meaning. Indeed, we are forced to conclude that he is describing something he had actually seen in his lifetime, and that there was some portion of Eastern Christendom where the Eucharist came before the Agape, and both were conjoined.

While we have reason to think that in the Western Churches the Eucharist and the Agape were separated before the end of the second century, there were certainly many parts of the Eastern Church where the early link between the two ceremonies was retained even into the fifth century. Particularly was this so in the district round about Alexandria, though not in the city itself. The historian Socrates[1] (*Hist. Eccles.* v. 22), in a chapter dealing with 'Remarks on Diversities in Christian Usages,' says, 'The Egyptians round about Alexandria and the

[1] Socrates (380–450 (?) A.D.) was born and lived at Constantinople. His testimony is concerning the first half of the fifth century.

inhabitants of the Thebaid hold their religious assemblies (συνὰξεις) on the Sabbath (Saturday), but do not participate in the Mysteries in the manner among Christians in general, for when they have eaten and satisfied themselves with all kinds of food, about sunset, they make their offerings[1] and partake of the Mysteries.' In the city of Alexandria a different custom held, but this evidence as to the rural usage is very interesting. It certainly implies that an Agape preceded the Eucharist, for the words (παντοίων ἐδεσμάτων) 'all sorts of food' and 'satisfied themselves' (εὐωχθῆναι) can only have reference to the Agape.

The evidence of Sozomen (*Hist. Eccles.* vii. 19) probably tells the same story in different words: 'There are several cities and villages in Egypt where, contrary to the usages established elsewhere, the people meet together on Sabbath evenings, and, although they have dined previously, partake of the Mysteries.'

While referring to this particular district it is interesting to turn to the witness of the author known to us as Eusebius of Alexandria, referred to by Sozomen in his *Ecclesiastical History* (vii. 9). He has left some sermons which are not earlier than the fifth, nor later than the seventh, century.

[1] Greek προσφέροντες, which is a frequent word for celebrating the Eucharist, but also includes at times the idea of an Agape.

Among them are two homilies on the Commemoration and Feasts of Martyrs. He urges that those who attend such feasts should be very careful and pure in their conduct. He suggests that they should exercise their minds and restrain their passions by recollecting that the martyrs themselves are probably present at the feast, and would like to see the poor people fed. Unfortunately, he says, the conduct is far from what it ought to be. There are some folk who, when they have had their meal, pay not the slightest attention to the reading of the Holy Scripture and the Psalms. On the contrary, they sharpen their tongues, talk, laugh, and amuse themselves, until they roll home dead drunk, and lie there till next day. Or perhaps they may rouse themselves to go and applaud at the theatre, and cry out against those who want to pray.

What a picture of an Agape!

Though Polycarp lived at a much earlier date (A.D. 69–155), the *Life of Polycarp* by a Pseudo-Pionius can only be used as evidence for the fourth century.[1] In chapters xxv.–xxvi. of this entertaining work the following story of what is apparently an Agape is told:

'Once upon a time Polycarp went to Teos to visit a certain bishop, Daphnus by name. . . .

[1] See the *Vita S. Policarpi auctore Pionio*, published by Duchesne, Paris, 1881. I have used Lightfoot's translation.

Daphnus, in thanksgiving for this great favour, made an offering (προσφορὰν ἐποίησεν)[1] in his presence to a number of brethren. Accordingly he set a little cask of wine in the midst of them; but when he told the servants to bring wine from the house and pour it in, Polycarp said, "Let it be as it is, for it will not fail." And as they drew and drank the wine, while yet it only abounded the more, a servant-girl standing by shouted out, not in fear, but in merriment and laughter, saying, "Inexhaustible little cask!" At this the angel who was appointed over the miracle of power retired, and the result was that even the wine that was there vanished.'

A further reference to the Agape comes from the twenty-third chapter of the same book, where, describing the duties of the Lord's day, he gives as his list 'making exhortations and appeals, and offerings (προσφοραὶ) and eucharists, rejoicing, and partaking of food.'

The existence and importance of the Agape in the fourth century is confirmed by some references in the letters of the notorious Emperor Julian (A.D. 331–363), who lived at Constantinople. Two passages are worth quotation. The first is from Julian's letter to Arsacius, the high-priest (*pontifex*)

[1] 'Make an offering' includes the Eucharistic elements together with contributions to the Agape, gifts for the maintenance of the clergy, and food for the relief of the poor.

of Galatia. He refers to the growth of Christianity in the following terms: 'For us in so short a space of time (may Nemesis be propitious to my words!) there has been so great and so strange a change in history as no one could have previously dared to choose. . . . But what is its cause? . . . The impious religion of the Christians has increased in power—that is, its hospitality (*φιλανθρωπεία*) to wanderers (*ξένοι*), its care as regards the burial of the dead, and its imitation of a holy life (*σεμνότης πεπλασμένη*).' He proceeds to wish that the Galatian pagan priests showed the same piety, and urges his friend to press them into a holier life—to avoid show, to keep out of drinking taverns, to behave themselves seemly, 'as the Christians do.'[1]

In a later passage there is a more direct reference to the Love-feast, when Julian accuses the Christians of taking advantage of the neglect of the poor by these heathen priests to lure folk into Christianity, 'as a child might be lured by a cake from home, on board ship, and so sold into slavery in some foreign port. . . . In the same manner, beginning with their Agape, as it is called among them, and their entertainment and ministry of tables . . . they have led the faithful into atheism.' The reference to the lure of a 'cake' is, of course, specially

[1] Quoted from the edition of Julian's letters by Peter Martin, published in Paris, 1583.

appropriate in connexion with the discussion of the Agape.

Three notable persons in the fourth century are commonly known as the Three Cappadocians. They are Basil (A.D. 329–379); his brother, Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 336–395); and their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus (A.D. 326–390). Of these three, two, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, have left some evidence of the existence of the Agape in Cappadocia. This testimony will come up more readily when we treat of the funeral and commemorative Agapae.

There were three Church Councils of the fourth century that dealt with the Agape. About A.D. 353 a Council was held at Gangra, the metropolis of Paphlagonia, and it made an effort to take away the abuses of the Love-feasts. The Eustathian heretics are supposed to have introduced into the Agape behaviour that was bringing it into disrepute, and the aim of the Council was apparently to restore it to its proper dignity. Canon 11 of the Council says, 'If any one despise those who in faith solemnize Agapae, and who, by reason of their honour for the Lord, invite the brethren to meet together; and if he be unwilling to take part in these assemblies because he lightly esteems the matter, let him be anathema.' Whether it was the effect of Eustathian teaching or not, at least we know from this

canon that in Paphlagonia it was customary in the middle of the fourth century to hold Agapae in private houses on the invitation of individuals, and, further, that some sort of conviction was arising that the habit was not in accordance with the apostolic usage.

The Council of Laodicea, in Phrygia, held about A.D. 363, in its twenty-seventh canon forbade clergy and laymen who had celebrated the Agape to carry away any part of it into their houses, ' as this brings dishonour upon the office of the clergy.' The canon following proceeds to forbid the holding of the Agape, ' so called,' in cathedrals or churches, or to eat in the house of God (κυριάκος), or to lay tables therein One can surmise that such decisions were prompted by growing reverence for the Church as well as by the prevalent abuses of the Agape.

The Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 393), presided over by Aurelius the Archbishop,[1] made practically the same rules, for it enacted (Canon 29) that ' no bishops or clergy are to feast in a church unless it should happen that when they are travelling the needs of hospitality should make it necessary for them to have refreshment in the church. But from this sort of entertainment the ordinary people of the

[1] Possidius, in his *Life of Augustine*, chapter x., speaks of this Synod as ' Plenarium totius Africae concilium.' It should properly be referred to the ' Western ' chapter, but is valuable here as showing the three Councils in one view.

church are to be excluded as far as is possible.' St. Augustine was present at this Synod, and probably had something to do with the framing of this canon.[1]

It is perhaps more convenient to mention here the other references to the Agape in the various Councils. They are not many. In the Western Church the last enactment directly bearing on them was at the Second Council of Orleans in A.D. 541.

The Eastern Church dealt with the question a century and a half later. In A.D. 692 the Emperor Justinian II summoned an Oecumenical Synod to meet in the Trullan Hall of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople. Two canons of this Trullan Council dealt with the Agape.

Canon 29.—The African practice of receiving the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday is ' disapproved.' This had reference to the fact that the Synod of Hippo (Carthage) in 393 had decreed (Canon 28) for Africa that the sacrament should be celebrated fasting except on Coena Domini (Maundy Thursday), being the anniversary of the institution.

Canon 57 decreed that ' honey and milk may not be offered on the altar.' This can have reference only to offerings for a Love-feast.

Canon 74 practically repeated the canon of Laodicea, that Love-feasts within the church are

[1] See *Aug. Ep.* xxii.

forbidden, and threatens the penalty of excommunication to those who hold Agapae in churches.

So far had the Agape sunk in Christian estimation in the seventh century!

That the Agape did not die out as speedily in the Eastern Church as in the Western, but simply evolved into different forms, is amply evidenced. Not only in the Orthodox Greek and Russian Churches do traces still remain. They have been noted in several of the minor and schismatic Churches. I choose one of these latter for illustration, because of its possible effect on the Moravian Agape in later days.

Gibbon devotes a whole chapter to a sect called the Paulicians. They were semi-heretics; but as most of the information about them comes from their opponents, they have been as egregiously libelled as any Christian sect. Of late years they have been better understood since an ancient and valuable work of theirs, called *The Key of Truth*, has been translated and annotated by Mr. F. C. Conybeare.[1] The Paulicians lived beyond the Taurus Mountains, in the south-east of Armenia. They lived by themselves, conducting their own religion without reference to the great Greek and Roman Churches.

[1] Mr. Conybeare's edition of *The Key of Truth*; also see his article 'Paulicians' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. See also Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and Adeney's *Greek and Eastern Churches*, chapter v.

From somewhere about the fourth or fifth centuries, on to the most recent times, they have had a continuous existence, so far as can be known. They seem to have been the remains of a branch of primitive Adoptianism which was so widely scattered in the East. They also seem to have been the sect named Pauliani, which was condemned by the Council of Nice. *The Key of Truth,* which was composed about the year 800, reveals a simple Church Order with no hierarchy. They acknowledged three sacraments, Repentance, Baptism, the Body and Blood. The last-named was, of course, the Eucharist. It was celebrated at night, and was joined with the Agape, the latter ceremony coming first in order. The same custom is in use to the present day with these people.

Conybeare, in his introduction to *The Key of Truth* (p. clxiii.), says :

'It would appear that, like the primitive believers for whom the Didache was written, the Paulicians interpreted their sacrament less as a sacrifice offered for the sins of men than as a meal symbolic of the unity of the faithful ; as an indication that the Church is the one indivisible body of Christ, of which each believer is a limb. This explains why in the account of the Eucharist . . . so much importance is attached to its being a *single* or *one* unleavened loaf that is laid on the table. This one loaf was the symbol of the union of all believers.

. . . Having such a significance for them it was naturally not dissociated . . . from the Agape or common meal of Christian love, of which it is the solemn and fitting conclusion. Their Agape, moreover, though this point cannot be so clearly made out, seems to have been a continuance of the old Paschal meal of the Jews, and in the meats consumed at it the flesh of pigeons and of sheep was preferred in the earliest Armenian Church. Yet it was not like the Jewish Pascha, held but once a year. More probably, as their enemies intimate, every common meal had among the Paulicians a sacred character.'

In support of the contention that the common meal was based on a Jewish precedent, Conybeare refers to the Armenian Canons of Basil, where occur the following regulations regarding the Agape :

1. 'From animals caught in the chase, let no one dare to sacrifice (or make) a *matal*, but only doves and other birds.

2. 'A strangled animal killed by violence, let no one dare to sacrifice as a *matal*.

3. 'The animal which one consecrates to the Lord, the same let him offer ; but if it falls unexpectedly into a snare, let him salt it and distribute it to the poor.'

The combined forces of persecution and missionary zeal drove the Paulicians, or at least a body of them, to evangelize Eastern Europe. They spread

up the Balkan peninsula, and settled a new colony at Philippopolis, and in the year 1189 Frederick Barbarossa found them in Bulgaria in considerable strength. That their influence went further north there is every reason to believe, for in Bohemia and Moravia from the twelfth century on there are to be found dominant principles of religion very similar to those so energetically preached by the Paulician missionaries. On these principles it will be sufficient to say that they were of an ultra-Protestant character, though coming long before the Lutheran period. To summarize the points briefly:

1. 'They blasphemed the Virgin,' holding that 'Christ was made flesh *in* but not *of* the Virgin.'

2. They allegorized the Eucharist, and denied that the material things bread and wine could be spiritual things as well, and they added, 'We are not worshippers of matter, but of God; we reckon the cross and the church and the priestly robes and the sacrifice of the Mass all for nothing, and only lay stress on the inner sense.'

3. They not only refused to bow to the cross, but called it 'a cursed tree,' and broke up crosses and crucifixes.

4. 'They repudiated St. Peter' because he denied the Lord.

5. 'They hated all monkery,' and only recognized two grades of clergy.

When one finds in the twelfth century a body of teaching and church usages in the district of Bohemia which includes a sort of Agape, and when two hundred years later the same teaching and many of the same usages are still alive, including the Agape, it seems reasonable to infer that some trace of the Love-feast persisted down through these centuries. It is, of course, only a surmise, but a surmise not destitute of reasonableness.

There was also another body of Paulicians in Thrace, the descendants and converts of some whom Constantine Copronicus had transported to this part of Europe. They assiduously propagated their Protestant teaching through Thrace, and they, too, sent their missionaries into Bulgaria and won many converts. Closely connected with this Paulician movement in Bulgaria there was a movement of the Bogomils, or 'Friends of God.' An account of these is given by the author Euthymius,[1] from which it appears that they held their sacrament in much the same way as did the Paulicians, and were, of course, ultra-Protestant in the strength of their repudiation of Transubstantiation. Up to the year 1230 we read of the existence of these 'Friends of God.' The Albigenses in the West, so cruelly slaughtered in the Crusade of Simon de Montfort,

[1] Euthymius Zigabenus, died after A.D. 1118 (quoted in *E.R.E.*).

appear to have been more or less related to these 'heretics.'[1]

In the Abyssinian Church traces of the Agape usages continued for some centuries. Further mention of these traces must, however, be left for a later chapter. In the East Syrian (Nestorian), Armenian (Monophysite), and Georgian (Greek Orthodox) Churches the Agape was from the first a survival under Christian and Jewish forms (as Dr. Conybeare insists)[2] of the old sacrificial system of a pre-Christian age :

> 'Sheep, rams, bullocks, fowls, are given sacrificial salt to lick and then sacrificed by the priest or deacon, who has the Levitical portions of the victim as his perquisite. In Armenia the Greek word "Agape" has been used ever since the fourth century to indicate these sacrificial meals, which either began or ended in a Eucharistic celebration.'

The earlier usage of the Armenians is expressed in the following rules recorded against them by a renegade Armenian prelate named Isaac, who in the eighth century went over to the Byzantine Church :

> 'Christ did not hand down to us the teaching to celebrate the mystery of the offering of the bread

[1] See Adeney, p. 228. [2] See *Ency. Brit.*, art. 'Agape.'

in church, but in an ordinary house, and sitting at a common table. So then let them not sacrifice the offering of bread in churches. It was after supper, when the disciples were thoroughly sated, that Christ gave them of His own body to eat. Therefore let them first eat meats and be sated, and then let them partake of the Mysteries.'[1]

These old canons are adduced, of course, for the purpose of ridiculing the Armenians, yet they reflect the Agape usages none the less.

We have now completed for the time being our survey of the Agape in the Eastern Churches. It is not complete in the same way that a sketch of the same kind would be as regards the Western Church, for in the latter case the common meal as a religious rite has a fairly distinct terminus *ad quem*.

[1] Given in the *Historia Monothelitarum* of Combefisius, col. 317. Quoted in the *Ency. Brit.* Older MSS. of the Greek Euchologion contain numerous prayers to be offered over animals sacrificed.

IX

THE AGAPE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY AND AFTER: WESTERN CHRISTENDOM

In turning the gaze to Western Christendom in the fourth century, one finds oneself confronted with different aspects of the history of the Agape from those which were contemporaneous in Eastern Christendom. As a brotherly meal among church members the Agape had now almost disappeared in the West, and where it persisted at all it was fulfilling other functions than those contemplated in its initiation in apostolic times. The three outstanding personalities of Western Christendom in the fourth century—Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome—have not much information to give in regard to the Agape. Of the three, Augustine is the most valuable witness, not only because of his ecclesiastical eminence, but by reason of his wide experience in Africa

and Europe. His testimony includes both Carthage and Rome, and incidentally bears witness to the unity of the two continents in church organization.

In the time of Augustine it is noteworthy that the Agape had begun to drop into desuetude as a devotional exercise of the Church's life. The celebrations with which he is familiar are funeral, commemorative, and charitable Agapae. The funeral and commemorative Agapae will be discussed in another chapter, seeing that there is some doubt whether they are properly to be termed Agapae at all.

In his Epistle to Aurelius (xxii. 4) he tells that good Bishop of Carthage that the Agape was practically dead 'throughout the greater part of Italy and in all other or almost all other Churches across the seas, because in some places Agapae had never been celebrated, and in other places, though they had arisen and become established in usage, they had been wiped out and abolished by the diligence and care of the bishops.' In the same Epistle there are other references which speak of the Agape as taking place in cemeteries. In chapter vi., for instance, he says, 'But since these orgies and dissipated carousals in cemeteries are usually considered by a carnal and vulgar populace to be not only memorials of martyrs, but even consolations to the departed, it seems to me an easier method of discouraging them by reason

of their foulness and disgrace.' Surely that is a sorry testimony to have to bear of the once beautiful ceremony of Christian Love !

Alongside of the commemorative Agapae there were still relics of the older forms, which were themselves evolving into a kind of charity meal for needy Christians. Such an Agape is mentioned in Augustine's treatise against the Manichaean heretic Faustus, who accused the Christians of having adopted a heathen sacrifice and transformed it. In reply to this accusation Augustine says :

> ' We have not turned their sacrifices into Agapae, but we have come to understand that notable sacrifice of which I spoke just now, at which the Lord said, " I will have mercy rather than sacrifice." For our Love-feasts feed the poor, both with vegetables and with meat, . . . and since for the most part food is expended in the Agapae on the poor, do you suggest that there is any similarity between the pity of the Christians and the sacrifices of the pagans ? Assuredly there is not the slightest likeness.'[1]

The importance of this passage lies in the fact that Augustine can only claim one advantage for the Agape over the pagan parallels, namely, that the

[1] It is perhaps worth noting that Augustine does not use the Greek form of the word, but speaks of ' Agapes.' The word had become Latinized.

Christian Love-feasts have an element of charity in them that was absent in the others. It almost seems as if the Agape had lost its *raison d'être* as a brotherly meal when persecution ceased in the Roman Empire, although the promptings toward Christian fellowship in some such ceremony were an essential part of the new experience that came in Christ.

It is doubtful if Athanasius can be properly called a Western. He was Bishop of Alexandria; but, on the occasions of his banishments from his see, he spent some time in Rome, in Belgium, and in Gaul. There is, however, connected with his name a small tract on *Virginity*, which is perhaps not by his hand, but which seems to have come from a Western source.

This curious work, *De Virginitate*, dates probably from the fifth century, and gives advice to Christian virgins on the keeping of their virginity, a subject brought into prominence in the fifth century in the Western Church by the newer ideas of Monasticism. A quaint piece of advice to the virgins was to avoid bathing even in private for their souls' good. Its author refers to the evils of the public Agapae, and describes a proper ritual for a kind of private Agape. He directs how the sisters of the Christian community after the synaxis of the ninth hour (3 p.m.) are to dine (chapter xiii.):

'And whenever thou seatest thyself at the table (τραπέζα) and comest to break the bread, when thou hast sealed it (σφραγίσασα, i.e. made the sign of the cross over it) the third time, bless it, saying the following: "We bless Thee, our Father, because of Thy holy resurrection, for through Jesus Christ Thy Son Thou hast revealed it to us; and just as this bread was formerly scattered, but now is united and brought together on this table as one entity, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth to Thy Kingdom; for Thine is the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen." This prayer, as thou breakest the bread and art about to eat, thou must say. And when thou layest it on the table and desirest to eat it, repeat the "Our Father" entire. But after dinner (or breakfast), and when we rise from table, we use the prayer given above, viz. "Blessed be God, who hath pity and nourisheth us from our infancy, who giveth food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that ever having of all things a sufficiency, we may superabound in all good works in Christ Jesus our Lord,"' &c.

It is clear from the quotation that the author refers to some kind of private Agape. He then enjoins that if two or three other virgins are present they also should give thanks over the bread set out, and join in the prayers. But if a catechumen be found at the table she should not be suffered to join

with the full believers in their prayers, nor shall she sit with her (the Christian virgin) to eat the morsel (ψωμός, used specially of the sanctified bread).

> 'Nor shall they sit with frivolous and joking women if they can help it, for they have been sanctified to God, and their food and drink have been hallowed by the prayers and holy words used over them. . . . If a rich woman sits down with them at table, and they see a poor woman, they shall invite her also to eat with them, and not put her to shame because of the rich one.' (Cf. 1 Cor. x.)

Here we have pictured as late as the fifth century a Lord's Supper which, like the one described in 1 Corinthians, was Agape and Eucharist combined, and was held in a private house and not in the church, the celebrants being holy women. It is not, of course, for common Christians, but is provided for women who were in fact, if not in name, nuns.

One of the most interesting figures in Western Christendom at this period was Paulinus of Nola (353–431), who was successively a Roman Consul, a monk, and Bishop of Nola. He was born in Bordeaux, and laboured in Spain, Gaul, and Italy. In one of his letters (*Ep.* 33) he tells of the basilica of St. Peter at Rome being used for the entertainment of the poor on the occasion of the death of the wife of a Christian citizen named Alethius, and he adds

that such doings would have been impossible at Nola in his church of St. Felix, for he had put down these practices. In an earlier Epistle (13) to Pammachius there is a passage in which he says:

> 'I shall come now to the consideration of pious works, and shall not deal with the sanctity of grief. I can well recall seeing great crowds of pitiable people—those poor folk who are the very defenders (*patronos*)[1] of our souls, who well deserve the alms of the whole of Rome (*stipem meritant*)—whom thou didst gather in large numbers into the magnificent cathedral of St. Peter, so that the whole interior and the courtyard and the space around the steps were quite filled, and so carefully were they arranged in companies that all were fed with abundance of food.'

St. Jerome's testimony[2] to the existence of the Agape is not of any great value. At the end of the fourth century, when his letters were being written, there was practically no Agape in existence in the West, except among the monastics, and apparently Jerome had not much acquaintance with an Agape in his Eastern travels. Two of his letters to Eustochius, the daughter of Paula, contain passages that may be quoted. Writing to her on

[1] 'Patronus'=(1) former master of a freed slave; (2) an advocate or pleader.

[2] I have translated from Catalan's edition of the *Letters* (1731), Book i. 9, 17.

the ' natalis dies ' of St. Peter, he says that the day should be celebrated not so much by abundance of food as by exultation of the Spirit, ' because it is surely absurd that we should desire to honour the martyr with a great glut of food when we know that it was by fasting that he pleased God. We ought, therefore, to eat so (moderately) that discourse and the reading of the Scriptures may follow the food.'

In another letter to her on the curious subject of how to retain her virginity, he declaims against the ' plague of Agapetae ' that has invaded the Church.[1] He enunciates the excellent principle, ' Munda omnia mundis,' and then proceeds to abuse the young widows for their behaviour. They go about, he complains, ' in sedan chairs ; they are regular tom-boys (*semiviri*) ; their cheeks are rouged, and you would imagine they had not lost husbands, but were looking for them.' He adds that they are a little too fond of meeting the clergy at the feasts, that the matrons are kissed, and that the young widows who have had experience of the domestic tie now prefer the freedom of widowhood. People call them chaste virgins and nuns, but after the

[1] Agapetae were virgins and widows who were ' spouses of the Church.' Some of them lived in their own homes, but many of them allowed themselves an ecclesiastical ' protector,' who shared their dwelling, to say the least. Public opinion appears to have been very tolerant of these disorders, for they had often to be denounced in sermons of the time. The name had no connexion with the Agape. See *E.R.E.*, sub. ' Agapetae.'

dubious feast (*post coenam dubiam*) they go home to dream of the apostles.'[1]

There are not many more references in Western writings to the Agape. From the beginning of the sixth century, with few exceptions, the common meal died out of the Church, and the desire for common meals which is sporadic in civilized communities showed itself in other than religious forms from age to age.

Two minor references may, however, be mentioned to complete the list. The last enactment in a Western Church Council directly bearing on the Agape was at the second Council of Orleans in A.D. 541. It was then decreed that ' no one is to perform his worship in church by singing or drinking or indecency (*lasciviendo*), for by such worship (*votis*) God is irritated rather than appeased.'[2]

It is strange, too, to find Britain connected with the Agape on a minor historical occasion.

Gregory I authorized the use of Agapae in Great Britain at the dedication of churches for the recently converted heathen of England. The passage in his letters conveying this permission is interesting as giving a specimen of the policy adopted by the early Catholic Church towards newly converted regions :

[1] There is much else in the same strain pointing to feasts, which were partial Agapae, at which widows and clergy partook.

[2] Quoted from Leclercq, col. 821 n.

'Boves solent in sacrificio Daemonum multos occidere. Debet his etiam hac de re aliqua solemnitas immutari, ut die Dedicationis vel natalitio sanctorum martyrum, quorum reliquiae illic ponuntur, tabernacula sibi circa easdem ecclesias, quae ex fanis commutatae sunt, de ramis arborum faciant, et religiosis conviviis celebrent.'[1]

One of the disappointing things connected with the Agape history is that a considerable section of the Western Church, Gaul and Spain, has left us practically no testimony of the existence of an Agape. If it were possible to count on the witness of Paulinus of Nola, who was a Gaul by birth, the case would be different; but his evidence clearly deals with Italy. Irenaeus is strangely silent on the matter. Hilary of Poictiers does not mention the Love-feast, neither does John Cassian. The Synod of Arles (A.D. 314) made no mention of it, nor did the Synod of Saragossa (A.D. 380), and altogether the matter is unsatisfactory.[2]

Nevertheless, I cannot think that there were no Love-feasts in the early Gallic Church; and my reasons for this belief are as follows:

1. The history of the Church in Gaul during the Agape period of Church History is exceedingly

[1] Greg. *Eps.* xi.

[2] I have searched cursorily several authors, such as Sulpicius Severus, where one might have expected to find some reference, but have found no mention of Love-feasts.

wrapped in mystery.[1] We have only the vaguest ideas as to how Christianity came to be in Gaul, and we have no reliable data for determining the date when the first messengers of the gospel came to it. There is one theory, for instance, that St. Paul was the evangelist. But Sulpicius Severus in the fifth century wrote that the 'gospel was received beyond the Alps somewhat late (*serius*).'[2] Then again, on the opposite side, Tertullian, who had no special knowledge of the matter, in a somewhat oratorical passage addressed 'Ad Judaeos,' boasts that the gospel has gone into the remotest parts of Spain and Gaul and Britain. The statement is clearly hyperbole, yet in the days of Cyprian we know that there was sufficient Christianity in Gaul to necessitate a Bishop of Arles, and he had even begun to show signs of heresy. One thing we are fairly sure of. From its inception the Church in Gaul had sympathies with the East rather than with the West, and kept its Easter as in Asia. That it should have failed to make the acquaintance of the Agape is inconceivable, and we are bound to look on the silence of the authorities as in no sense proving the absence of the Agape from Gaul.

2. There is at least one passage in a most important document of the period that may suggest the existence of the Agape. In A.D. 177 the churches of

[1] See Lightfoot, i. p. 431 seq. [2] *Hist. Sac.* ii. 33.

Vienne and Lyons, having suffered from a terrible persecution, sent particulars of it in a letter to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia. This epistle, which is preserved for us by Eusebius, is the *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* of the Gallic Church. It gives with great particularity and with horribly graphic details the story of the martyrs. It states, too, that the chief cause of the mob-hatred which raised the persecution was the spreading of the old scandalous tales about inhuman banquets and incestuous revels among the Christians, and that these were testified to by renegade slaves. Now it may be pressing the matter a little hardly, but in view of the previous connexion of these scandalous stories with the Agape and the Eucharist, and only with these two portions of church worship, I think we are justified in finding a somewhat indirect reference to the existence of an Agape in the two churches so persecuted.

3. What strikes one as most significant in the silence regarding the Agape in Gaul is the fact that there is no reference to the existence of funeral Agapae, or memorial feasts, for their brave and notable dead. Gregory of Tours, writing about the end of the sixth century (*Historia Francorum*, A.D. 576–588), describes a miracle which took place on the occasion of the Festival of St. Polycarp in Riom, a town of Auvergne,[1] but there is no reference

[1] See Lightfoot, pp. 455–6 and 552.

in the account to anything of the nature of a funeral Agape ; there is a celebration of Holy Communion and nothing else. Gregory also tells us of a tomb of one Cassianus, the Bishop of Autun, who died about 400. A stain in the shape of a cross appeared on his tomb and rendered it a famous place of resort, but there is no mention of any feast there. But, as an explanation, we learn also that the death-day of Polycarp coincided with a Jewish high-day, and also with a great heathen festival, probably the anniversary day of Caesar-worship, and there may have been a very natural desire on the part of the devout to curb all appearance of indulging in banquets or ceremonies of any kind on such a day.[1] Possibly, therefore, if further light were available on other difficult cases we would be able to understand the silence better.

4. We may add to these considerations the fact that a large number of reminiscences of the Agape have persisted in French churches even to this day. In the old Gallican Mass given by St. Germain of Paris (A.D. 576)[2] it is noteworthy that the Kiss of Peace was retained as part of the Mass, and was retained not as a portion of the Communion Service, but before the Eucharistic prayer of consecration, in the place which the Kiss of Peace occupied in the

[1] Lightfoot, i. pp. 693–4.

[2] Quoted by Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 211.

most primitive services when the Agape was ending and the Eucharist beginning. If there had never been an Agape attached to the Eucharist in Gallican churches, the Kiss of Peace would doubtless have come later in the service. Up to recent times the distribution of 'pain bénit,' a modern form of the old εὐλογία of the Agape, was common in many of the French churches.

5. I venture, in conclusion, to make a suggestion as to the silence concerning the Agape. Chateaubriand, in his book *Les Martyrs*, has pointed out that the early Christian Church in France retained for some generations several Druidic customs inherited from pagan ancestors. There are Druidic usages which have persisted along with Christian rites even to this day in parts of France. The Pardons in Brittany are a case in point. Depending on the somewhat unsafe source of the *Acta Martyrum*, Chateaubriand describes ceremonies in which the Christian element was almost swamped by Celtic Druidism. If this is in any sense a true picture of what actually took place in Gaul, it seems quite comprehensible how and why the Agape had a very short life and a very quick death in those districts. For Christians to be associated with magic, with nature-worship, and perhaps even with human sacrifice, was certain to kill the Agape in any part of the Roman Empire more surely and swiftly than

even the worst looseness of conduct would have done.

The causes which led to the eventual discontinuance of the Agape in the Western Church, and to a less extent in the Eastern Church, are so important that they had best be left for a future chapter.

X

THE AGAPE AND IMPERIAL POLICY

We have seen already (chapter i.) that associations or clubs were exceedingly common in both Eastern and Western cities, and in some particulars corresponded to modern trades unions. The analogy, however, must not be pressed too hard. They often gave sickness and disablement benefits, and many of them were burial societies as well. Like modern trades unions, too, their tendency was to take political action in defence of their trade interests. In addition to these there were many Collegia or clubs which were not connected with trade, but with religion and social life ; and these, too, had interest in the State which it was likely they would pursue with corporate energy. It was natural, therefore, that such societies should often be viewed by the authorities at Rome as being distinctly a menace

to safe government. One of the clearest illustrations of this is found in the correspondence between the younger Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, and his imperial master Trajan.

One hundred and fifty firemen of Nicomedia wished to form a Collegium for trade and social purposes, and applied to Pliny for a licence. So far as we can judge, they would have done better to have formed their club and said nothing about the licence, that being the general usage elsewhere in the Empire. However, the question was brought by Pliny to Trajan for decision. On the whole, Trajan was a shrewd and sane governor, and his attitude towards this application is instructive. He replied that the union among a hundred and fifty workmen would soon form a Hetairia, i.e. they would become a body of Hetairoi, or pledged comrades, who would feel their bond to one another stronger than that of obedience to the law. In Greek cities, such as Corinth and Nicomedia, it was almost sure to happen as Trajan said. There were two reasons for it. First, they were well away from the direct oversight of the central government, and, secondly, there was a sort of hereditary leaning towards such associations, as being in a sense the successors of the ancient Mysteries ; for the Collegia modelled their initiation and ritual—just as certain secret societies do still—after the great Mysteries

of ancient Greece. The members of the Collegia were not merely Symbiotes, or Associates, but also, in Greek speech, Symmystai, persons initiated in the same mystic ritual. The closeness and strength of this κοινωνία between members of such guilds was almost incredible. It was, as Ramsay says,[1] 'a power often stronger than the tie of country or of blood, and was considered by the wiser pagans to be a real danger to the healthy and free life of society.' It was this κοινωνία which the Emperor Trajan looked on as a danger, and which led him to deny to the firemen of Nicomedia the rights of association.

We need not be surprised if the common meal of the early Christians in just the same manner roused at times the suspicion and antagonism of the authorities. At other times when the Collegia were tolerated, the Worship, and the Agape in particular, took every advantage of the toleration. For even in the days when the guilds were proscribed the imperial executive could not or did not dare to do all it wished. It could forbid or restrict the formation of new associations; but that was not always done, except when they were formally brought before its notice, or sought to obtain a licence. Many societies were doubtless initiated where no licence was ever sought, for the Empire

[1] Expositor, series vi., vol. ii., p. 437.

was filled with them, and certainly no adequate attempt was made to wipe out the existing guilds. In Rome, where they flourished under the direct gaze of the executive government, several were dissolved. Julius Caesar, who initiated the policy of the Empire in many things, laid down measures concerning Collegia. The historian Suetonius (*Caes.* 42) does not, however, tell us any particulars. He merely says, 'Cuncta collegia praeter antiquitus constituta distraxit.' Of course, this may be a statement as to Caesar's attitude and not as to distinct actions.

Augustus followed on the same line: 'Plurimae factiones titulo collegii novi ad nullius non facinoris societatem coibant. Igitur . . . collegia praeter antiqua et legitima dissolvit.' An inscription from a marble tablet which is to be found in a sepulchral monument at the gate of St. Sebastian's, Rome, confirms this. It speaks of being erected by 'collegio. . . . Symphoniacorum, qui sacris publicis praesu (!) sunt, quibus senatus c.c.c. [i.e. coire, convocari, cogi] permisit e lege Julia ex auctoritate Aug(usti) ludorum causa' (see *Corpus Inscrip. Lat.*, vol. vi. 2193). Of this lex Julia we have no particulars, but it is apparent that each new Collegium had to receive a sort of licence from the Senate before it could come into being. At first such a law would apply only to the metropolis, but it would

soon be applied more or less perfectly to the provinces.

We are confirmed in this by several references to corporations which had obtained this licence. For instance, there was a Collegium Dendrophorum which had permission from the Senate to meet (*Orelli*, 4075). There was also a 'corpus fabrorum navalium Ostiensium quibus senatus consulto coire licet' (*Corpus Inscrip. Lat.* xiv. 168). Of course, this does not at all prove that all Collegia, or even the majority of them, were licensed by the State. Marcian, in the *Digest* (xlvii. 22, 23), says, 'Nisi ex senatus consulti auctoritate aut Caesaris collegium, vel quodcunque tale corpus coierit, contra senatus consulta et mandata et constitutiones collegium celebrat,' and also, 'Collegia, si qua fuerint illicita mandatis et constitutionibus, et senatus consultis dissolvuntur'; and from this we may gather that the number of illicit guilds must have been large. We cannot think that even the majority of the Collegia in the Empire were licensed. Turning over the pages of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, one finds references to Collegia very frequently, but it is rare to find any mention of their being licensed.

Now we know from a passage in Josephus[1] that the Jews in Rome were accustomed to take advantage

[1] *Ant. Jud.* xiv. 10. 6.

of the usages regarding Collegia, in order that their worship might attract as little attention as possible from their foes. The fellowship provided by such guilds would be very sweet to the Hebrew exiles, and would be a strong national link. We know that more than once in the days of the Empire the Jewish influence in the household of Caesar was considerable, and this may account for the fact that when other Collegia were forbidden the Jewish assemblies were allowed. At first, when the distinction between Christian and Jew was not very easy to find, the Christians reaped their share of this favouritism in Rome and elsewhere, but soon the Christian meetings were compelled to find standing room for themselves, and they naturally adopted the same plan of forming Collegia. It meant some degree of safety for them, for unless some one reported the fact to the Government and urged a prosecution there was apparently no official whose duty it was to inquire into such matters. In many places, too, the Christians were far too insignificant a body to be of any account. In addition to this, they never touched political matters, and generally were too obviously harmless to attract any attention. But the Christian worship was undoubtedly included in the term ' Illicita Collegia ' for the first century of its existence.

Another side-wind blew the Christians some good

from the reign of Augustus. In his fear that too many trade Collegia were coming into existence in the Empire, he tried to counteract the influence of evilly disposed Collegia by lending his patronage to other Collegia which put Emperor worship in a prominent place in their ritual. Therefore he had formed throughout the whole of Italy a number of clubs called 'Augustales,' or 'Cultores Augusti.' At once this step made it possible for other religious Collegia to be formed. The Jews, for instance, who were eager to take advantage of any such opportunity, united in the same way according to their synagogues; and later on the Christians did the same. Lucian, as we saw, called a Christian congregation a θιάσος,[1] or religious association, and Celsus termed the Christians θιασῶται, members of a religious club.[2]

In this connexion it is interesting to see how another religious Collegium, connected with the worship of the Egyptian divinity Isis, fared at Rome under the Emperors. It was introduced into Rome early in the last century of the Republic. A Collegium of Pastophori, or Priests of Isis, was established in the time of Sulla.[3] It was not a

[1] *Peregr.* 11. [2] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, iii. 23.

[3] See Apuleius, *Met.* xi. 17. Cf. *Diod. Sic.* i. 29 and *Inscr. Maff. Mus. Ver.* 230. Pliny's letters give several references to the Iseum or Temple of Isis in Rome.

licensed cult. Nevertheless it attracted large numbers of citizens to its membership, it intruded itself on the very Capitol, and, worst of all, it was believed to sanction grave immoralities. Repeatedly the State had taken action (58, 53, 50, and 48 B.C., &c.), attempting to end its existence, but without success. The reason, of course, was political. Egypt was a dangerous factor in the Empire, and Egyptian religions and national cults could not be tolerated. It was for this reason that Augustus took strong measures against it, and wellnigh accomplished its destruction. For a time it lived on sporadically in Rome, co-existing with Christianity, but dying out in the second century.

To return, however, to the matters in hand. The Jews managed to keep within the law, and flourished in Rome in the early years of the Empire. During the reign of Augustus they seem to have had liberty to hold their synagogue services, with the exception of a few years when they, too, were under the imperial ban. The principate of Tiberius (A.D. 14–37) saw the State decidedly hostile to the Jews, possibly because they disdained Emperor worship, which had become fashionable. Gaius Caligula (A.D. 37–41) was more favourable to them. Possibly the earliest signs of Christianity appeared at Rome in his reign. If so, it would, of course, be looked on as a Jewish cult, and would attract little or no notice.

In the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41–54) the Jews were sometimes tolerated and sometimes persecuted. St. Luke's statement (Acts xviii. 2) that Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome only deals with a temporary inhibition of synagogue worship, which naturally drove pious Hebrews away from the city. It is interesting to find that this very prohibition seems to have been called forth by reason of the quarrels which arose between the Jews and the Christians.[1]

Nero, under the influence probably of Poppaea, was favourable to Jews and Christians alike, and was only led into a terrible persecution of the Christians when he had to find some set of people on whom to cast the blame for his own evil deeds.

From this period onwards the Christians began to increase in the imperial capital, and began, we cannot doubt, to hold their Agapae, and to form congregations which were more or less of the nature of Collegia. While we have strong circumstantial evidence for these statements, it is unfortunate that we have only a limited amount of material at our disposal, and this is not always definite or reliable. Later on in history Tertullian tells us that the Christian gatherings were ' sub umbraculo religionis certe licita.' We certainly know periods

[1] The whole matter is summarized by Dr. R. J. Knowling, *E.G.T.*, ad loc.

when this was true, but we also know of periods and places where it was not true. We must proceed, therefore, to examine the matter as best we may.

Reference has been made to the fact that it was natural that the Christians, with their regular meetings and their common meals, would drift into Collegia. It was the only possible format for their worship under the usages of the period. But at the very time that this was taking place the imperial executive was exercised in mind about the guilds. An association formed ostensibly for one purpose would somehow become political. This was specially the case with Collegia in which foreigners and slaves preponderated. Sometimes they were harmless, sometimes they were revolutionary in character; and with its policy of opportunism the executive simply watched, and did nothing unless there was real need to interfere. It left them unimpeded 'dum ne quid ex publica lege corrumpant.' From A.D. 68 to 96—that is, till Trajan came to rule—we know next to nothing about the development of Collegia and the laws concerning them. Concerning Trajan, we know how he set his face against Collegia in Bithynia, but we do not know how he dealt with other parts of the Empire.

We may sum up the situation in the first century by saying that Christian worship with its common meal naturally ranked as a Collegium at its first

appearance in Rome. It was unlicensed, but still there was room for it to grow and develop. There was room also, unfortunately, for the violence of the mob or the treachery of the informer to bring it into trouble with the law when occasion served.

An interesting question, which only indirectly concerns the history of the Agape, would be the inquiry how far the usages of the pagan Collegia regarding their organization and officials have been reproduced in the Christian Church. Were πρεσβυτέροι and ἐπισκόποι drawn from the usages of the Greek θιάσοι, and was the term ἐκκλήσια adopted from the same source? Probably a closer study of the papyri will give some light on the matter.

How did a Collegium Christianorum arise in any locality? We can imagine two ways. Either a band of poor and comparatively insignificant Christians belonging to the same locality united together for worship and a common meal, or else some wealthy family gathered round them a little church to which they could give some degree of shelter and financial support. In either case the common meal would be a very important factor in the bond of brotherhood. In most cities of the Empire the only meat to be bought would have come from a pagan temple, and with other food there would be somewhat similar disabilities. In consequence the whole question of food to a scrupulous

Christian would become acute. It could best be solved on a sort of co-operative basis, as indeed it actually was solved in the daily Agape wherever held. Specially if there was some well-to-do Christian family with ground, buildings, and money to spare, the problems of Christian living were not so difficult. Indeed, it was customary in ordinary pagan Collegia to have one wealthy family often dominating the guild. We read of a 'collegium quod est in domu Sergiae Paullinae' (*Corpus Inscrip. Lat.* vi. 9148) and of a 'collegium quod consistit in praedis (= praediis) Larci Macedonis,' &c. (*Corpus Inscrip. Lat.* vi. 404).

From the Trajan-Pliny correspondence[1] we can see that it was likely that Christianity would come into conflict with the existing laws only when mob violence or the wiles of the common informer interfered with the peaceful worship. So long as Christians remained few in number, their daily common meals were not noticed. The neighbours would look on them doubtless as ἑταιρεῖαι, or Sodalitates, which, while illegal, were very customary, and which minded their own business. Quite possibly, too, the neighbours themselves for the most part belonged to unlicensed Collegia, on which the Christians could give information were their own meetings reported on. No moral question could enter the

[1] Quoted at length in chapter v.

conscience of even the most scrupulous Christian on the score of breaking the law in so meeting, for the word 'illicitum' as applied to a Collegium did not mean illegal, but only unlicensed. This distinction, obvious as it is, needs to be kept in mind. Even when Pliny took action against the Christians in Bithynia, he did not do so on the ground that they were an illegal association. If he had done so, or had thought it worth his while to do so, he would certainly never have bothered Trajan with the matter. Hardy[1] has a good deal to support him when he interprets the incident as follows :

> 'Pliny, by Trajan's order, had issued an edict forbidding Hetaeriae.[2] This did not indeed actually affect the Christians. But the reason why it did not is almost more striking that if it had. For in consequence of this edict we find that the Christians gave up their common meal,[3] and so became a purely religious association and not a Hetaeria, a step which left the Christians . . . safe from interference.'

What happened in Bithynia might easily happen in other parts of the Empire; and though we have no clear reference to the Agape being affected by the

[1] E. G. Hardy, *Studies in Roman History*, pp. 143–4.

[2] 'Post edictum meum quo secundum mandata tua hetaerias esse vetueram.'

[3] See p. 76.

edicts against Hetaeriae, we have passages in which the Christians are spoken of by outsiders as being associated with a secret and illegal association.[1] They are also said to have held 'nocturnae congregationes,' and to be altogether a 'latebrosa et lucifuga natio' (*Octavius*, viii.).

There does not seem to be any evidence that the Christians were ever punished for forming a Collegium or holding a common meal. The Roman Government only interfered with religions when they were supposed to be dangerous to public morality, or social order, or political security. Indeed, one feels that for the most part a fairly liberal interpretation was given by officials to all such laws as might have been put in operation against Christians. They seemed to their neighbours to be something like the Nihilists of their time. They had a most vivid belief, in the first century at any rate, that the end of the world was just at hand. Their attempted communism and their general method of life must have been a little exasperating to the officials of the Empire. They would not eat ordinary meat; they were disinclined to marry, and if they married they preferred to avoid all the duties of family life; they would not take oaths in court; they refused to take

[1] Cf. passage from Celsus, quoted p. 108, and cf. Minucius Felix, 'Homines deploratae illicitae ac desperatae factionis.'

service in the army; they would not join in the pleasures of the Amphitheatre; they disdained to illumine their doors at festivals; and altogether they laid themselves open to the charge of cherishing an 'odium generis humani.' To add to all this, they were accustomed to meet for their Agape under cover of night, carrying sundry parcels and dishes, and so mysterious was the nature of these meetings and so unusual their ritual that it was small wonder terrible stories about them spread like wildfire.

Indeed, it is surprising that prosecutions were not brought much more frequently against the Christian guilds; yet I have not found one instance of any such proceeding. In the beginning of Book v. of the Apostolic Constitutions there is a statement that 'if any Christian is condemned to the gladiators or to the wild beasts or to the mines by the impious judges on account of his faith towards God and his love (ἀγάπη),' &c.; but there can scarcely be a reference to the Agape in this passage.

Another factor in the relief which the Collegia laws afforded to Christian brotherhoods arose from the very purpose of these laws. They were aimed solely at political intrigues, 'ne civitas in partes scinderetur.' When, therefore, the religious cults which were brought from the ends of the Empire, and found a fruitful soil in Rome, met together as Collegia, no one greatly cared until or unless they became

too nationalistic and eager to influence authority on behalf of their peoples. As soon as they began to form a party in the State, or to initiate a legislative programme on behalf of their province, at once the official eye was directed towards the new faction. This was not at all likely to be the case with the Christian associations. They owned no nationality, and took no part in political things.

Such was the state of affairs till the middle of the second century. The new factor in the situation arose when Hadrian (117–138) gave certain privileges to Collegia Tenuiorum. These privileges were greatly extended by Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161–180), who licensed generally all societies which did anything for the relief of the poor. Almost at once Christianity took advantage of the indulgence. The Agape had always taken account of the poor brethren —those in prison, those travelling, those deprived of goods and lands, &c. From this time a new course of safety seemed to open up, if only the charity of the Agape were extended. We have seen that at this time a new emphasis on a charity meal took the place of the older idea of a brotherhood meal. We have now before us one of the causes of the change. The astute lawyer Tertullian, in his *Apology*, strongly urged that the Christian Agape was a clear instance of a Collegium Tenuiorum, and when talking on the matter applies all the common phraseology

of the Collegium to the Agape. He speaks of *arca* and *honoraria*, of *summa* and of *stips*, and of *menstrua die*. Indeed, he contends that now Christianity is a *Licita Factio*, because it seeks to accomplish the same end as the Collegia Tenuiorum, but is not disgraced with luxury and mere enjoyment. The African lawyer understood his brief, and entered into it *con amore*, and there is something like a note of triumph in his periods as he heaps up his argument. He knows that the court cannot now say 'No,' though he cannot hope for much favour.

There was undoubtedly a considerable measure of improvement in the Christian position once its Agapae came within the scope of the Collegia Tenuiorum. Now they could hold property. They had, too, the rights of burial, and the permission to form such cemeteries as the Catacombs. In a word, they received corporate rights, and their communities henceforth rank as juristic persons.

But when this is said, all is said. The new legislation was very far from freeing the Christians from persecution. It made their worship and their common meal possible, but it still left them at the mercy of the mob, the common informer, and the prejudiced or bribed official.

Possibly it was this legislation which popularized the Agape in the early part of the third century; but when the days of persecution ceased the need for

the Agape appeared also to cease, and its decay set in. But that is for a later chapter. To conclude the matter:

'It was M. Aurelius who first granted these corporate rights to licensed collegia. Thus they had the right of manumitting slaves[1] and of receiving legacies,[2] and no doubt either then or a little later of owning land.[3] . . . One of the first uses which the Christians would make of their *de facto* recognition as Collegia Tenuiorum would be the purchase of ground for burial-places. . . . However, the organization of a Christian community as a Collegium Tenuiorum or funeraticium, and its recognition by the State, would only remove . . . one particular ground on the score of which they might have been interfered with. . . . It would give a certain protection and sanction to Christian meetings certainly, to Christian burial-places, which might probably remain unviolated and secure to them in any but a general and systematic persecution. But . . . there was nothing in the partial recognition by the State which would in any way exempt, or help to exempt, the Christians from whatever measure of persecution they were subject to from the Roman Government on more general grounds as *rei majestatis*, or as *hostes publica*.'[4]

[1] See *Digest*, xl. 3. 1, 'Divus Marcus omnibus collegiis quibus coeundi jus est manumittendi potestatem dedit.'

[2] *Digest*, xxxiv. 5. 20. [3] *Digest*, iii. 4. 1.

[4] Hardy, pp. 148–150.

XI

THE AGAPE IN THE CATACOMBS[1]

It is proverbial that theological literature is often unreliable as a source of information regarding the common life of the ordinary Christian. It is certainly so in the case of the Christians of early Rome. Questions of ritual and dogma too often take the first place in official writings, and the authors are more often concerned with subtlties of thought than with details of daily existence. There is one great source of information, however, regarding the first three centuries of the Christian era at Rome which is full both of interest and of accuracy. It is the multitude of inscriptions painted and carved on the

[1] I am under obligation throughout this chapter to the article 'Agape,' by M. Leclercq, in Cabrol's *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne*, and also to a pamphlet by Horace Marucchi, the director of the archaeology and Egyptology sections of the Vatican Museum, *Le Dogme de l'Eucharistie dans les monuments des premiers siècles* (Brussels, 1910).

countless graves of the subterranean corridors and chambers of the Catacombs.[1] In the great city of the dead which lies beneath the soil of the suburbs of the Imperial City there are to be found between three and four millions of such tombs. In the several hundred miles of underground corridors the Christian worshippers had a metropolis of their own. Here in the days of persecution they could meet without interruption and without fear of arrest. Here they buried their dead, and wrote on the tombs and walls their rude 'graffiti,' which tell of their hopes regarding the life to come. Here, too, they gathered in times of danger to partake of the Sacrament and the Agape, and gathered round the burial-places of their beloved dead to renew their bonds of fellowship with one another and with Christ.

What testimony, then, do the Catacombs afford us of the existence and usages of the Agape in the early centuries?

A large amount of the evidence is connected with a number of pictures which represent a religious banquet under various conditions.

On the Via Salaria, which leads in a northerly direction from the old Colline Gate (now the Porta

[1] An interesting description of the Catacombs is to be found in *The Early Christians in Rome*, by the Very Rev. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, D.D.

Pia), there is at a little distance from the city the famous Catacomb of St. Priscilla. The New Testament Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, is supposed to have been buried here, but it is not she who has given the name to the burial-place. It is called from a Priscilla who was mother of Pudens, a wealthy Roman of senatorial rank, whose home was a recognized meeting-place for the early Christians. The catacomb began in his garden or vineyard, and extended until it became one of the most famous, as it is one of the oldest, of the Christian burial-places.

This catacomb contains one of the most notable of the many frescoes which portray the 'Fractio Panis.' It was discovered in 1893. It represents a meal in which seven persons take part. Six of them recline on a semi-circular triclinium, and the seventh, who seems to be the president of the banquet, is seated on a low stool. By a common fault in perspective he appears to have his feet on the table. A couple of plates are placed on the table, one of which holds two fish, and the other contains five loaves. There is also a cup. Seven baskets, three at the extreme right of the picture and four at the extreme left, are also portrayed. The fresco was painted probably in the early part of the second century, when as yet the Agape was, as we know, in use in the Roman Church.

The picture corresponds to no single scene in the Gospel narrative. There is a junction of at least two scenes. The loaves and fishes and baskets point to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and the seven figures to the morning meal on the shores of the lake. Undoubtedly an Agape is indicated in the picture, but it is not unlikely that it is an Agape in which the Eucharist is also celebrated. For the miracle of the five thousand had a sacramental association in view of the passages in the Gospel according to St. John where the miracle is represented as the basis of the Lord's Eucharistic discourse on the Bread of Life.

This fresco may be taken as typical of many similar ones found in the Catacombs. In the Cemetery of St. Peter[1] and Marcellinus there are no less than ten such frescoes of the 'Fractio Panis,' the chief two of which were discovered in the arcosolium of one of the crypts, and were evidently executed in the middle of the third century.

There is a similar important picture in the Catacomb of St. Callixtus, representing four banquets, and dating from the third century.

In the Catacomb of St. Agnes there is a picture of a banquet of five women which dates from the

[1] This Peter was in orders in Rome as exorcist, and along with Marcellinus, who was a priest, suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Diocletian. The bodies of the two saints were carried away in a later century, and are now in Seligenstadt, near Maintz.

second half of the third century. There is also a later picture of seven feasters.

There are similar paintings of the ' Fractio Panis ' in the Catacomb of Domitilla.

It is abundantly clear that these pictures portray an Agape of some kind. They would have no adequate meaning otherwise. But there is also the probability that there is in them a reference to the Eucharist as well. The frequency of the pictures, and the evident reverence paid to the subject of them, points to an Agape with which the Eucharist was joined.

Some writers on the catacomb inscriptions have too hastily concluded that these pictures refer altogether to the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. They have, I think, failed to notice the frequency of the number seven. In the fresco in the Cemetery of Callixtus, already referred to, there are the usual seven figures seated round what appears to be a table. There are, in the foreground, two plates with fish and eight baskets filled with food. But this picture is not a ' Fractio Panis,' though so similar to the others. It is inscribed ' Come and Dine,' with an obvious reference to the incident in the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. Why, then, are there only seven figures? We can merely surmise that the artist usually depicted the seven disciples and omitted their Lord,

possibly because of some idea that the risen Lord was undepictable. At any rate, if there are only seven figures there are eight baskets, and perhaps there is a hidden significance in that fact. I may also add that in these pictures of seven people they are at times represented as nearly naked, to indicate that they were fishermen and that they had just come from their boats, as the Gospels tell.

I have said that in a large number of the pictures there is clear reference to the loaves and fishes, and that where that reference is present there is almost certainly an implication that the Eucharistic idea was in the mind of the artist. Apart from the passages in John vi., there is ample corroboration from later centuries. Paulinus of Nola, in his description of the Agape which he witnessed at St. Peter's in Rome (quoted above), adds to his description of that incident that it reminded him how 'quinque panibus et duobus piscibus panis ipse verus et aquae vivae piscis Christus explevit' (*Ep.* xiii. 11).

There is even more direct evidence. Some years ago there was found at Carthage a pyx which appears to have been used in the Eucharist. It shows us Christ seated and blessing the loaves and fishes which two apostles present to Him. We have already seen the close association of the Agape and the Eucharist in the North African Churches. It is, therefore,

not straining the point of these pictures too greatly to assume a sacramental import in those portraying the feeding of the multitude.

It may be added that a fifth-century painting from a catacomb discovered in Alexandria comprises three subjects. In the centre there is the multiplication of the loaves and fishes by Christ, to whom Peter and Andrew present the food. On the right hand there is a scene representing a feast, and there is this inscription:

ΤΑϹ ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑϹ ΤΟΥ ΧῩ
ΕϹΘΙΟΝΤΕϹ

i.e. '(They are) eating the Eulogiae of Christ.'

After a careful study of the whole subject, Leclercq concludes with three statements which sum up the evidence quite fairly:

1. That at Rome in the second century the idea of a feast was closely associated with the idea of the Eucharist.

2. That the individuals seated in these frescoes could not have been partaking of the Eucharist in that posture, and must represent feasters taking part in an Agape, and presided over by a bishop.

3. That about the time when these frescoes were constructed the celebration of the Eucharist was joined to the Agape, and that both were portrayed

in the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the symbolism of which allows us to recognize an Agape followed by a Eucharist.

To these may be added another sentence, that the number of feasters was in many cases represented as seven, in recollection of the incident on the shore of Lake Tiberias.

There is a further matter on which the catacomb inscriptions throw light. In an earlier chapter I have suggested that the Agape had its origin in the common meals of the Saviour and His disciples, but specially that it took its name from the morning meal on the shore of the lake; that the early Christians looked on that act of fellowship, the last of His risen life before His ascension, as standing in the same relation to the Agape as the Paschal meal, the last of His life of ministry before His crucifixion, stood to the Eucharist. I have also suggested that the two great words of the Lord at the post-resurrection feasts were 'Peace' and 'Love,' and that the way in which the risen Lord rang the changes on the idea and words of 'Love' at the lakeside breakfast determined for the early Church the name to be given to their common meal. This theory has a somewhat interesting corroboration in the catacomb inscriptions. In the pictures which occur in the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus there are found at the side of the

women who attend on the feasters some crude writings. They are as follows :

Irene da calda—Agape misce mi
Irene porge calda—Agape misce nobis
Irene misce—Agape da calda
Irene misce—Agape porge calda

Leclercq points to the fact that there are similar inscriptions in the frescoes on the tombs of Vincentius and Vibia, which are in the Cemetery of Praetextatus. But in the latter cases there are double pictures. The painter has joined in one fresco two distinct banquets, the intention of each being quite clear. The upper feast is the heavenly one. The lower feast is a funeral banquet celebrated by the survivors. There are seven persons present at it. The room is decked with garlands, and the feast consists of a chicken, a hare, a patty, and a fish.

There is no evidence that the common meal was ever known as ' Eirene,' but the greeting of the risen Lord at the gatherings in the upper room must necessarily have impressed itself with its word ' Peace ' on the ceremonial of any Christian common meal. It certainly seems to have come very near to giving a name to what was eventually called the Agape.

It is not only by pictures that the Catacombs are

connected with the Agape. In these burial-places, grim and weird as they must have been, the Agape itself, the most joyful of Christian gatherings, often took place. In the days of persecution they were usual places of assembly; but even when danger had ceased they were still visited by families and groups of Christians who desired to partake of the funeral Agapae in the neighbourhood of a saint's remains.

At the time of the Empire it was common to find the tombs even of pagans built in two stories or platforms. The lower one was used for interments, the upper one for family gatherings and funeral banquets. At these funeral banquets the friends of the deceased, and often the whole membership of the Collegium to which he belonged, used to attend. When the feasting-place, with its triclinia, was the property of a Collegium it was generally known as a 'Schola.' If the Collegium was too poor to own its own Schola, it held its meetings at a neighbouring inn, but usually it found a benefactor good enough to provide a suitable meeting-place for its banquets.

The Christians, for reasons of policy and of friendship, followed the example of these pagan guilds in matters of constitution and organization, and specially in this matter of burial feasts. Quite a unique instance occurs in the case of a Schola

Sodalium—a Christian guild meeting-place—which was found in the Catacomb of Domitilla, and of which Leclercq gives a picture and plan. It consisted of a suite of five rooms, which were evidently used for the purposes of an Agape. A raised bench runs round the largest room, and the walls have been covered with paintings at one time. There is a small well, and a sort of wall cupboard for plates and other crockery. There is no doubt that in this inaccessible spot, where there was little danger from the imperial officers, the Christians were accustomed in the days of persecution to meet for the brotherly intercourse of the Agape.

The pagans had nothing to fear, and therefore their places of gathering were almost public. Their inscriptions, too, were unconcealed and numerous. On the contrary, the early Christian fraternities dare not expose themselves more than was absolutely needful, and so their inscriptions were often symbolical and esoteric. They did not directly portray an Agape, but portrayed it under the type of the 'Fractio Panis' or the 'Come and Dine' symbols. That is why the inscriptions are sometimes so equivocal.

One inscription has come to light, however, which has nothing equivocal about it. It is on a stele of hard wood, and was found at Fanum Fortunae (modern Fano). It furnishes us with a precise

statement as to a Christian Collegium which held its meetings and celebrated its banquets regularly.

LOC . . SEP . . . . . .
CONVICTOR . .
QVIVNAEPULO
VESCISOLENT
INFRP . . . . INAGR
P . . XX

'Locus sep(ulturae) (collegii) convictor(um) qui una (—o?) epulo vesci solent. In fr(onte) p(edes). . . . In agr(o) p(edes) viginti.'

The circumstances, according to Leclercq, render it certain that the 'convicti' or 'messmates' referred to in the inscription were Christian, and therefore we have here a clear reference to the Agape.

Before leaving this interesting portion of the subject there are one or two other relics of the Agape yet to be noted.

Several Agape tables are in existence from early times. One of these was found at Matifou (ancient Rusguniae), near Algiers, among the ruins of the Basilica. It is a semi-circular table, 4 feet 3¼ inches in diameter and 2 feet 2 inches across, built of masonry, with a polished marble top.

Two larger tables have been found at Tipasa, in Algeria, in the remains of a funerary chapel. This

chapel is the work of Bishop Alexander, and dates from the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth. At the right-hand side of its nave, between two pillars, is a stone slab, semi-circular in form, which seems to have been an Agape table. It is a massive piece of masonry, measuring 10 feet 2 inches across its diameter side. Its maximum height is 2 feet 5 inches. This Agape table has considerable importance in view of the fact that it is found in the ruins of an edifice whose use or purpose is undoubted. It was a funeral chapel constructed by the Bishop to shelter nine tombs of persons whose dignity or piety was evidently highly reverenced. We have, therefore, an interesting link here of the junction of Agapae with funeral obsequies in an age later than the Catacombs, and in a very different locality.

In connexion with this matter of Agape tables, St. Augustine adds to our information in his *Sermons* (xiii. 305, 310) by referring to the 'Mensa Cypriani' which existed at Ager Sexti, where the great Bishop of Carthage had met his death.

Another interesting Agape table has been found near Tixter, between Sétif and Algiers, and may be seen in the Louvre. It is a semi-circular stone table about 5 feet in diameter. In the centre there is a small circle in relief which contains the Chrismon, and the words 'Memoria Sancta.' On the table itself

there is an inscription occupying seven lines which reads :

1. De ter(r)a promis(si)onis ube (= ubi) natus est Cristus.
2. Apostoli Petri et Pauli, nomi-
3. -na m(a)rturu(m) Datiani. Dona-
4. -tiani, Cipriani, Nemes(i)ani-
5. Git(t)ini et Victor i(d)is
6. an(n)o provi-
7. -nc(iae) recentiviges.

On the rounded half of the table, and inscribed by a later and careless hand to the left and right of the circle, there is the following :

Victorinus ◯ septimu id
miggin us septmr idu
et Dabula et de lignu crucis.

Evidently the circle in relief was intended to hold a small bowl or sacred vessel.

Several other such Agape stones have been found, most of them of the same semi-circular pattern, and some of them with inscriptions.

There is a still further antiquarian souvenir of the Agape which comes also from Algiers.[1] At Morsoth, to the north of Tébessa, there remains the ruins of the apse of a large church with several rooms

[1] See S. Gsell, *Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie*, vol. ii., p. 234.

alongside of it. In one of these rooms a large quantity of broken glass cups was found. These ampullae were of a vase shape, raised on a stem, and without handles, and are supposed to have been used for the purposes of an Agape. The weight of the broken fragments is over nine pounds.

Quite a number of souvenirs of a similar character have been found in the Roman Catacombs.[1]

[1] See art. on 'Glass: Christian' in Smith and Cheetham's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*.

XII

FUNERAL AND COMMEMORATIVE AGAPAE

From the earliest times and among the most widely scattered peoples it has been customary to hold funeral feasts, at which the memory of the dead was celebrated. The object of these feasts was not simply hospitality to the mourners and their companions, for the guests very often contributed their full share towards the victuals. Moreover, certain common features of such banquets are found not only among the comparatively civilized European races, but among more primitive and savage peoples.[1]

It has been, for instance, generally believed that

[1] See *E.R.E.*, vol. iv., 'Death and Disposal of the Dead.' Old Testament references are Jer. xvi. 7, Hosea ix. 4, Tobit iv. 17, and probably 2 Sam. iii. 32–35, and Ezek. xxiv. 16–17. See Tacitus, *Annals* I., vi. 5; *Hist.* ii. 95. In one of the great inscriptions of Beni Hassan, Khnoumhotpon speaks thus: 'I made the name of my father to flourish. . . . I carried his statues to the temple of the town. I brought to them offerings of bread, wine, water, pure meat. I chose a priest of Ka. . . . I made a decree for his funeral feasts to take place at all the cemetery feasts' (Maspero's translation).

the dead person is himself one of the feasters at such meals. A vacant seat is left for him, and his name is called aloud in some cases. Nearly always, too, there is a certain ritual element present—certain kinds of food are partaken of, in a certain order, or with a fixed ceremonial.

There is a considerable amount of information extant regarding such feasts among the Romans. Amid the varying details of varying localities and individuals, the following may serve as a description of an average funeral meal in wealthy Roman circles[1]:

> 'At the end of the mourning period (*sacrum novendiale*) a feast to the dead is celebrated at the tomb, and a funeral banquet is held at the home. . . . Memorial festivals which partake of the nature of a communion are celebrated on February 13–21, the Parentalia, or pagan All Souls' Day, again on the birth or burial anniversary, and again at the end of March or May, the *violaria* and *rosaria*, when violets and roses are profusely distributed, lamps lighted in the tomb-chambers, funeral banquets held, and offerings made to the gods.'

It seems only natural that Christians under the Roman Government should seek to christianize these usages. While they would be compelled to

[1] See *E.R.E.*, vol. iv., p. 506. Also cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, v. 77–81 and Ovid, *Fasti*, ii. 535–542.

sever their connexion with many pagan practices, on the score of idolatry and indecency, here was a usage most worthy to be regarded with favour; it could easily be cleansed from its associations and utilized for worship and edification. There would, therefore, arise a tendency to graft the existing Agapae on to the funeral feasts. This was all the more to be desired because the memory of the holy martyrs was becoming precious. Not only did the faithful meet around their tombs for devotions, but it was argued that if ordinary pagans received honours in burial, the Christian martyrs who had witnessed a good confession by their deaths deserved even greater honour; and what more convenient or suitable honour could be paid to their memory than the usual funeral banquet?

In Carthage, for instance, the tomb of Cyprian, as we have seen, attained both honour and notoriety. Frequent Agapae were held at it, and, in imitation of the pagan rites, the worship degenerated into singing and dancing around the tomb. Soon it became a scandal to the faithful, and in order to put an end to these doings the Bishop Aurelius instituted a sort of nocturnal guard to keep vigil at the place of burial. The duty of this guard of honour was to compel the dancers to seek their amusements elsewhere. So it happened that from that time onward vigils became common at the spot and at the

tombs of other holy martyrs. These vigils continued in use as a sort of holy exercise when the need for the guard had disappeared.[1]

There is a question whether these feasts at tombs were proper Agapae or not. Certainly when they ceased to have any link with the Church, and became associated with the Parentalia and other such banquets, their apostolic nature was very slight indeed. Nevertheless they were originally considered to be of the nature of Christian Agapae. The language applied to them, as we shall see, is similar to the language used concerning the older feasts. For instance, the *Canons* of Hippolytus have this direction (169):

> 'If memorials (ἀναμνήσεις) take place on behalf of those who have departed, let them first partake of the Mysteries before they sit down together, but not on the first day (of the week). After the oblation let the bread of exorcism be distributed among them.'[2]

The Apostolic Constitutions, which is a sort of parallel to the *Canons* of Hippolytus (about A.D. 375), has this command:

> 'Now when at the memorials (μνείαι) you are invited, feast with good order and fear of God, as

[1] Augustine, *Serm.* iii. 5.

[2] 'Bread of exorcism' was a feature of the later Agapae.

being able even to intercede for the departed. Being presbyters and deacons of Christ ye ought always to be sober both among yourselves and among others, so that ye may be able to warn the unruly' (Book viii., chapter xliv.).

St. Augustine has several references to Agapae of this class in Milan. He tells us:

'Whereas my mother therefore had brought into the oratories erected in memory of the saints, as she was wont to do in Africa, certain kinds of pottage[1] along with bread and wine, and had been forbidden to do it by the sexton, so soon as ever she knew that the Bishop (Ambrose) had forbidden this, she did piously and obediently embrace the motion. . . . But she, when she had brought her basket of these usual feasts (*epulae*), which she meant to eat a little of at first, and then to give the rest away . . . so soon as she found this custom to be countermanded by Ambrose, that so no occasion of riot might be given to such as loved drinking too well, and because that these funeral anniversary feasts, which were in honour of our dead fathers, did too nearly resemble the superstition of the Gentiles, she most willingly forbare it ever afterwards.'[2]

[1] 'Pultes.' It is doubtful what this word implies. Lewis and Short translate it 'A thick pap or pottage made of meal pulse, &c., the primitive food of the Romans before they became acquainted with bread. It was also used at sacrifices and as food for the sacred chickens.'

[2] *Confessions*, Book vi., chapter ii.

He also says :

'I know many who adore tombs and pictures, I know many who drink most lavishly over the dead, and who, setting forth banquets before corpses, dig their own graves over those who have been brought to the grave (*super sepultos se ipsos sepeliant*), and who put their own acts of gluttony and excess down to the account of religion.'[1]

The question, however, seems to be quite clearly settled by St. Augustine, who in one of his epistles[2] tells us a plain story as to how the funeral Agapae arose :

'On the establishment of peace after the persecutions, crowds of Gentiles (*turbae gentilium*), who wished to be known as Christians, were restrained by the fact that having been accustomed to spend the feast-days with their idols in a riot of feasting (*epularum*) and debauchery (*ebrietate*) now could not easily refrain from these most dangerous practices, yet nevertheless from ancient pleasures they were able to abstain, it seemed wise to our forefathers that, for a time, toleration should be shown towards this weakness, and that in the stead of those pleasures they were giving up, other festivals should be celebrated in remembrance of holy

[1] *De Moribus Eccles.* 134. [2] xxxix. 9, *Ad Alypium.*

martyrs, with similar luxury, but not with similar profanity (*sacrilegio*).'

Later on in the same epistle he proceeds to give fuller information as to the ritual, and says that at these funeral Agapae ' singing and reading (of the Scriptures) are alternately engaged in by no small multitude of both sexes.'

In his Epistle to Aurelius (xxii. 6) he deeply deplores the revelries and lavish repasts which were conducted in burial-places, and which were considered by ' a carnal and ignorant populace to be not only honourable to the martyred dead, but even consolations to them.' He then goes on to describe how he had used his influence against them by urging Aurelius, the Bishop of Carthage, to end them, and he tells of his own personal action at Hippo. He says that he read to those present in their worship the lesson of the driving out the money-changers from the temple. Then he read from St. Paul's Epistles sundry passages relating to drunkenness, fornication, and adultery (1 Cor. v. 11, vi. 9–11, xi. 20–22, &c.), and ' I added an exhortation showing how angrily and vehemently (*quanto commotius et vehementius*) Christ drove out of the temple drunken revellings which are everywhere disgraceful.' There can have been no mistaking the purport of that sermon, nor of Augustine's attitude to the funeral

Agapae. Nevertheless he was not successful, for he adds that some folk went away saying, 'Quare modo? . . . The ancient Christians found no harm in them.' He then denounced them out of Ezekiel, and showed that the Agapae had arisen out of necessity by reason of the hardness of their hearts. He also exhorted them to adopt the customs of the churches over the seas, and especially of St. Peter's at Rome, for the sake of congruity. Unfortunately we cannot gather clearly that the people of Hippo paid more attention to the ecclesiastical argument than they did to the homiletical.

The reference in this controversy shows that the people at Hippo considered the custom of funeral Agapae to be of very ancient origin. Certainly the pagan element in the feasts was of most remote origin, but the Christian festivals were then quite modern. We cannot trace them far back into the second century; there are a few early references, but they are too vague for safe reasoning. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, for instance, part of which may belong to the end of the second century, Paul is described (chapter xxiii.) as fasting in a sepulchre,[1] and in chapter xxv. it is said, 'There was within the tomb ἀγάπη πολλὴ (Lat., *gaudium magnum*),[2] and the lad brought five loaves of bread with vegetables,

[1] This is the Greek MS. reading, but the Armenian MSS. read 'house.'
[2] It is impossible to assert that ἀγάπη is here used in its technical sense.

and salt and water.' This may possibly be a reference to a funeral Agape, but it is somewhat uncertain.

The *Leucian Acts of John*, a Gnostic production of about A.D. 150–170, speak of ' going to the tomb to break bread,' but this may be a Eucharist and not an Agape ; and while we know that in A.D. 150 the Agape had very often a Eucharist joined with it, there is no proof that the Eucharist was only celebrated in conjunction with the Agape. It must often have been celebrated alone.

Tertullian (*De Corona Militis*, 3), immediately before describing Baptism and the Eucharist, has these words, ' We make oblations for the departed annually on their birthdays.'

Cyprian says (*Ep. ad Clerum*), ' We offer sacrifices for martyrs and keep their anniversaries,' the ' keeping,' of course, being open to the interpretation of celebrating an Agape. Here one may be pardoned for quoting an appropriate passage from the work *De Duplici Martyrio*, which has been (wrongly) ascribed to Cyprian, but is certainly of a later date. In this book it is said, ' Drunkenness has become in our Africa to such an extent a custom that men hardly consider it a sin. Do we not see that one Christian is pressed by another to drink himself full at the memorials of the martyrs ? '

When we come to the third century we are on firmer ground, and can find clear evidence of the existence of the funeral Agapae.

Hippolytus, who represents the earliest years of the century, tells us (*Haeres.* ix. 12) that Pope Zephrynus appointed a curator over the cemetery at Rome about A.D. 200. This implies that the Christian communities were being registered as Collegia Funeratica, and were likely to follow the usages of such associations in the holding of funeral meals.

Origen's evidence of the Agape is unaccountably slight, considering the bulk of his work that is extant; but in the Commentary on Job (Book iii.), generally ascribed to him, it is said, speaking of commemorations of the dead :

> 'We celebrate them, indeed, assembling the pious (*religiosos*) along with the priests, the faithful along with the clergy, inviting thither the poor, feeding wards (*saturantes pupillos*) and widows, so that our solemnity (*festivitas*) may be a requiem commemorative of the souls whose memory we celebrate.'

In the fourth and early fifth centuries there is quite a wealth of material concerning the funeral Agapae, but most of it comes from the Eastern Church. Gregory of Nazianzus, in a sort of hymn to martyrs,

asks the holy dead if they approve of the funeral entertainments, and feels sure that they as well as he lament the debauchery of his time. St. Chrysostom in one of his homilies[1] pictures the happiness of the man who can enjoy the funeral feasts of the martyrs, but hints that sin lurks very near such enjoyment.

The Agape in the fourth century certainly seems to have entered on a new phase of its existence. Its decay had set in, and it had also changed its character. In Western Christendom it was now almost converted into an entertainment held by families or churches on festal or mourning occasions. Sometimes these feasts were held in the churches, and here stalls and tables were erected for the sale of memorials of the martyr and of material necessary for his festival.[2] Sometimes they were held in private houses or in buildings associated with the tombs. In such cases the clergy seem to have been present, and the poor were certainly invited.

These commemorative Agapae seem to have borne different titles. Sometimes they were known as Agapae Natalitiae.[3] These were, of course, yearly feasts held in commemoration of the martyrs.

[1] Homily 47, Panegyric on Julian the Martyr.

[2] See Basil, *Regula Major*.

[3] Birthday Agapae, i.e. birthdays into the better world.

Theodoret about A.D. 429 tells of these yearly banquets being held in honour of deceased saints (*Hist. Eccl.* iii. 11), and the so-called sermon of Eusebius of Alexandria, which dates from the fifth or sixth century, informs us that at the feasts on saints' days 'the hosts consider that they are entertaining the martyrs themselves.'

Paulinus of Nola, as we have seen, gives an account of a funeral banquet held at Rome which he calls an Agape. It was given by Alethius for all the Christian poor in the city in the basilica of St. Peter's after the death of his wife. In another of his letters (xiii. 11), referred to already, Paulinus tells Pammachius of a similar Agape. Theodoret further tells of a kind of commemorative Agape which was really a christianization of the pagan Dionysia. He says (*Graec. Affect. Curatio. Diss.* viii., *c.* A.D. 437):

> 'The ceremonies (δημοθοινίαι) of Peter and Paul and Thomas are carried through, and in place of the ancient procession (πομπείς) and disgraceful obscenity of word and deed, temperate gatherings are celebrated, involving, not drunkenness and revellings and laughter, but divine hymns, and the hearing of the sacred oracles (λογίων) and prayers enhanced with commendable tears.'

Before leaving the subject of the funeral Agape, reference should be made to the somewhat peculiar

discoveries made by Gayet in his excavations at Antinoë. Some of the rock-cut tombs in which Christians had been buried had small chapels built before their entrances. Two of the bodies in the cemetery were accompanied by wine jars and baskets for bread, perhaps intended for a mystic Eucharist for the dead, while another burial contained a model in terra-cotta of several persons seated at a table, the whole forming a group supposed to represent the Agape.[1]

In the fourth and fifth centuries the Agapae got even more secularized, and not only imitated the pagan burial and Dionysiac customs, but at times they became Agapae Connubiales, or marriage feasts. Such Love-feasts at weddings are mentioned in some of the Epistles of Gregory of Nazianzen. It is possible that they were simply charitable feasts given at a time of great family rejoicing, to which the poor members of the church were invited, and to which a certain religious flavour and sanction were imparted. That, at any rate, is likely to have been their beginning. What they degenerated to we do not know.

There was still a further class of Agapae which came into existence at a later period, and which,

[1] A. Gayet, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, c. xxx. (Paris, 1902). Quoted *E.R.E.* iv. 115.

while not immediately commemorative, may suitably be included here. In the sixth century the name 'Agape' seems to have been applied to the dedication feasts of churches at Rome. Gregory of Nazianzus speaks of this as an ancient custom, and says that it had become most licentious. Reference has already been made to the extant letter of Gregory the Great to Mellitus (about A.D. 596), who was starting on a journey to England. The Bishop explains that when heathen temples were transmuted into Christian places of worship the date of dedication should be noted and festivals should be observed on the anniversaries. He adds, 'After killing cattle to the praise of God they should celebrate the occasion with religious feasting (*et religiosis conviviis solemnitatem cclebrent*).' Gregory also advised Augustine to celebrate the Agape in booths formed of the branches of trees at the consecration of churches in England.

While, therefore, the name 'Agape' is not always applied to the commemorative banquets of the early centuries, there is little doubt that they were in essence the same feast that had begun in apostolic times. When the necessity for registering Christian worship under the collegial system of the Empire disappeared along with persecution, there still remained the desire to adopt as many as possible of the innocent usages of pagan society to the higher

uses of Christian fellowship. The incentive as regards funeral banquets was specially strong in view of the honourable deaths that so many of the saints had met. The early Christians emphatically believed in the Communion of Saints, and the most vivid method of realizing that higher κοινωνία was to join as the pagans did, but with more assurance, in feasts at which the departed could take unseen their full share of the rejoicings. It was, perhaps, not very strange that the decadence which had made the simpler Agape unworkable eventually destroyed also the funeral Agapae.

XIII

THE AGAPE IN THE CHURCH ORDERS

At an early date in various districts the Agape acquired for itself some forms of liturgy, and attempts were made by different authors to formulate for it and for the other parts of Christian worship established services that might be used generally.

When dealing with the Didache, reference was made to the fact that it was the earliest of a series of important documents concerned with ecclesiastical discipline and matters of ritual. These Church Orders began to be written shortly after apostolic times. They were not authoritative ecclesiastical documents, but did much to prepare the way for the great liturgies. Their aim seems to have been to provide the clergy with a manual of their duties, and specially with directions for the proper fulfilment of the offices of public worship. They are

closely connected with one another, but the whole question of their interrelation is very involved and difficult. Nevertheless, so far as the Agape itself is concerned, the main critical questions are almost irrelevant. The Didache is not the parent document, but is near akin to it, and all the others seem to be (in Canon Maclean's phrase) 'collateral descendants' of the hypothetical lost Church Order. The main documents of this series may be listed as follows[1]:

Primary Documents.

1. The Didache, which, if we could recover the lost Church Order, would probably prove not to be primary but derived. Its date is about A.D. 120.[2]

2. The Apostolic Church Order (A.D. 300?). A document from Asia which has considerable traces of Didache influence, specially in Part I.[3]

3. Didascalia. This is scarcely a Church Order; rather it is a homiletic discourse on church life,

[1] I have here followed in their chief features the excellent lists given by Canon Maclean in *Recent Discoveries Illustrating Early Christian Life and Worship*, and by Bishop John Wordsworth in *Ministry of Grace*.

[2] See pp. 68–73.

[3] Preserved in Greek, Latin, Syrian, Coptic, and Ethiopic documents. The Syriac text and an English translation are to be found in the *Journ. of Theo. Stud.*, 1901, p. 59, &c., from the pen of Dr. Arendzen. There is no reference to the Agape in the document.

containing moral instruction and ecclesiastical regulations interspersed. Its earliest form dates from about A.D. 250.[1]

Derived or Secondary Documents.

The Canons of Hippolytus (A.D. 220).
Egyptian Church Order (A.D. 310).[2]
Ethiopic Church Order (A.D. 335).
Verona Latin Fragments, Third Part (A.D. 340).[3]
Testament of Our Lord (A.D. 350).
Apostolic Constitutions (A.D. 375).
Arabic Didascalia (A.D. 380).
Constitutions through Hippolytus.

Other Kindred Documents.

Pilgrimage of St. Silvia (A.D. 385).
Nicaean Gnomes (A.D. 400 ?).
Canons of Basil (A.D. 430–450).[4]

[1] The Didascalia was afterwards enlarged and worked up into the Apostolic Constitutions (Books i.–vi.), probably in Antioch.

[2] The Egyptian Church Order has a very close relation to the Canons of Hippolytus and the *Testamentum Domini*. Its evidence for the Agape is practically the same as that contained in the other two documents. It, however, calls the Agape 'the Lord's Supper.' See the art. on 'Canons Apostoliques' in the *Dict. d'Arch. Chr't.*

[3] Edited by Hauler. Its date is probably earlier than that of the *Testamentum Domini*. It contains scattered portions of the Didascalia, Apostolic Church Order, and another unknown Church Order.

[4] The 106 Canons of Basil are an Egyptian Church Order dating from about 430–450, known now in an Arabic MS. They have,

Four of these documents, other than the Didache, give considerable prominence to the Agape. They are :

1. The Didascalia and its relative, the Apostolic Constitutions.
2. The Canons of Hippolytus.
3. The Testament of Our Lord.
4. The Nicaean Gnomes.

1. *The Didascalia* and its related document, the Apostolic Constitutions, may be considered together. The Didascalia is probably a third-century production. It is found in several forms—in Syriac, in Latin, in Greek (its earliest form), and in a much-enlarged form in the Apostolic Constitutions. This latter writing is a collection of ecclesiastical regulations in eight books, professing to have been drawn up by the apostles themselves, and to have been transmitted to the Church by Clement of Rome. The Trullan Council of Constantinople (A.D. 692) accepted the eighty-five canons at the end of the book as being genuinely apostolic, but rejected the rest of the book. The title is a relic of the days when it was thought a good introduction

of course, no connexion with Basil, and exhibit Monophysite tendencies. They do not appear to refer to the Agape, except possibly in a passage which mentions that the bad custom of ' building cemetery chapels for gain ' is Egyptian in origin. See Wordsworth, op. cit., Appendix B. The Armenian Canons of Basil are a different document. They also refer to the Agape.

to a book to associate it with some great name. These Constitutions seem to have come into being after the Nicene Council, and their date appears to have been about A.D. 375.[1]

The passage in the Didascalia[2] which refers to the Agape occurs in connexion with an exhortation to laymen to bring 'heave-offerings' to God, and to honour the bishop in so doing, because 'he governs in the place of the Almighty: let him be honoured by you as God.'

Then it proceeds:

'Present, therefore, your offerings to the bishop, either ye yourselves or by means of the deacons; and what he receives, let him deal to you justly, for the bishop is well acquainted with those who

[1] Books i.–vi. are derived from the Didascalia with several changes. Part of Book vii. is from the Didache, and the remainder from an unknown liturgy. The eighth book can all be found in other documents. Funk reproduces the Apostolic Constitutions in Greek and the Didascalia in Latin on opposite pages (108–109). He suggests, too, that the author was an Apollinarian. The writer in the *Encyc. Brit.* says that it is written with an eye to the dying heresies of the third century, and says that the author must have been one of the circle of Lucian of Antioch. There is no ground for the extravagant praise heaped upon the document by Whiston when he spoke of it as 'the most sacred standard of Christianity, equal in authority to the Gospels themselves, and superior in authority to the Epistles of single apostles, some parts of them being our Saviour's own original laws delivered to the apostles, and the other parts the public acts of the apostles' (Historical Preface to *Primitive Christianity Revived*, pp. 85, 86)

[2] 'The Didascalia,' in the *Horae Semiticae*, by Margaret Dunlop Gibson, 1903, chapter ix., pp. 48, 49.

are afflicted . . . lest any one should receive many times in the day or in the week, and another should not receive even a little.

'And those who ask widows to Agapae, her whom he knows to be much afflicted, to her let him send oftenest. . . . Let double be given to each of the deacons for the honour of Christ; twice double to the governor for the honour of God Almighty. If any man wish also to honour the elders, let him give also to them as to the deacons . . . and if there be also a reader, let him also receive along with the elders.'

The widows referred to (*aniculae*) were a separate order in the Church. Chapter xiv. of the Didascalia says of them, 'Let widows be appointed, she who is not less than fifty years of age and over, in order that by reason of her years she may be removed from the thought of having another husband.' It is also added in the following chapter, as an additional qualification of a widow, that she 'should not lift up her voice when she speaks,' and that she should not have 'a long tongue.'

There is only one difference between this passage in the Didascalia and the parallel passage in the Apostolic Constitutions. It is that the latter speaks of 'an Agape or a reception' (ἀγάπην ἤτοι δοχήν), which word (δοχή) is sometimes used as being another name for the Love-feast.

The main value of this testimony is that it points to the restriction of the Agape in Antioch, about A.D. 375, to a semi-monastic meal for ecclesiastics, male and female. There is no indication that the ordinary poor of the church were invited. Their share seems to have been distributed to them by the bishop quite apart from a common meal.

2. *The Canons of Hippolytus*[1] stand, in a sense, at the head of the extant Church Orders. The book contains instructions regarding all important matters of church government, and may possibly represent the Roman Church Order of the first part of the third century. It is known in an Arabic translation of a Coptic version of the original Greek. Its date has been hotly contested. Funk,[2] for instance, held that it was written in the sixth century or later, and was derived from the Apostolic Constitutions (Book viii.). The generally accepted opinion, however, is that it is a somewhat interpolated work either of the Roman or of the Alexandrian Church early in the third century. Duchesne[3] says of it, 'Taken as a whole, this collection of liturgical and disciplinary prescriptions belongs certainly to a date anterior to the fourth century, and there is

[1] See Dr. Armitage Robinson's article in *Encyc. Brit.*; Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 524 eq.

[2] Funk, *Didascalia et Constit. Apos.*, 1906. [3] Duchesne, p. 524.

nothing to hinder us from assigning it to the time of Hippolytus himself.'

There are almost minute instructions in these Canons concerning the holding of Agapae. After describing the usage at various services and festivals, the writer says[1]:

'164. If an Agape is made, or a feast is being prepared for the poor, on the Lord's day (κυριακῇ), at the time of lighting of lamps, in the presence of a bishop, let the deacon rise up for the lighting.

'165. But let the bishop pray over them, and him who invited them.

'166. And there is necessary for the poor that form of thanksgiving which is (said) at the beginning of the mass (*missa*).

'167. Let him also dismiss them so that (men and women) separately, they may return (home) before darkness begins.

'168. Let them repeat psalms before they go home.

'169. If a memorial (ἀνάμνησις) is being made (memorials are made) for those who are dead, before they sit down (to the Agape) let them partake of the Mysteries, not however on the first day (of the week).

'170. After the oblation let bread of exorcism be distributed to them before they are seated.

[1] I have used Achelis' text as found in the Appendix to Mgr. Duchesne's *Christian Worship*.

'171. But to the catechumens, if the bishop care to do so, bread that has been purged by prayer is sent so that they may be associates of the church.

'172. A catechumen must not sit with them in the Lord's Agape (*in agapis*, κυριακαῖς).

'173. They may eat and drink to repletion, but not to the point of drunkenness (remembering that they are) in the divine presence, and with the praise of God.

'174. Let not any one talk much, or shout loudly, lest it happen that men make mock of you and you become a stumbling-block to them; and also that he who has invited you is put to shame, when it is known that you have wandered from good manners.

'175. But rather let them invite him regularly and all his family, and let the modesty of each one of us be seen, and let great respect be obtained by those examples which are found among us.

'176. Let each one pray that holy persons may enter his dwelling. For our Saviour said, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

'177. But when the bishop seated makes a discourse (*sermocinatur*) the others will have profit, and he himself will not be without gain.

'178. But if, in the absence of the bishop, a presbyter be present, let all turn to him as to one who is superior to the others in God, and let them honour him as a bishop is honoured, and let them not oppose him insolently.

'179. But let him distribute the bread of exorcism before they are seated, so that God may keep their Agape from dread of the enemy, and that they may rise from it safely in peace.

'180. Let a deacon at an Agape take the place of a presbyter, when a presbyter is not there, so far as prayer and the breaking of bread are concerned, which let him distribute among those invited.

'181. But it is not fitting for a layman to make the sign of the Cross on the bread. Let him only break it and do nothing else.

'182. If there be no clergyman at all present, let each eat whatever may be his share with noticeable thanksgiving, so that the heathen may see your conduct with envy.

'183. If any one wishes to prepare a feast for the widows, let him take care to have the feast, and that they be sent home before sunset.

'184. But if they are many, let him take care that there be no confusion, and that nothing prevent them from being dismissed before evening.

'185. To each one of them let there be distributed enough to eat and drink, but let them go away before the night darkens.'

There can be no question about the importance of this passage for the study of the Agape.

It seems to have escaped the notice of students of the *Canons* that there are three or possibly four different kinds of Agapae mentioned in these

sentences. There is first of all a series of rules (164 to 168) for an Agape proper, or for a feast for the poor, which was held on the Lord's day. It is not determined for us if the writer means to refer to one class of Agapae or to two in these five rules. Seeing, however, that in A.D. 250 (and we cannot well place the *Canons* at an earlier date) there were certainly in Rome Agapae for the poor, it is likely that the writer of the *Canons* means to imply that an Agape and a feast for the poor are two separate things, but that the same regulations apply to both. But more important than these two classes, in his estimation, is the third class of Agapae, the memorials or funeral Agapae, which could not be held on Sunday, and of which the Catacombs have given us such copious testimony. The Canons dealing with this type of Agape (169 to 182) are so minute as to warrant the idea that these were the most usual Agapae in Rome in the middle and end of the third century.[1] But there was also growing up a fourth kind of Agape in Rome at the time of the *Canons*, viz. ' a feast for the widows,' and for these he hastens in three rules (183–5) to give directions, which rules resolve themselves into three injunctions to see that the widows get home before dark. Evidently the new

[1] A corroboration of this division of the passage into four Agapae is afforded by the fact that in the Egyptian Canons (see Hauler, p. 113) the first two types of Agapae are omitted and the last two dealt with almost similarly to the *Canons* of Hippolytus.

arrangements for widows in the Church were creating some talk, and the writer is anxious to take away all occasion of abuse. At any rate, we seem to have here the beginning in Rome of the monastic Agapae which we have seen at a later date in existence in Antioch.

The discussion of the regulations regarding ritual I shall leave to another chapter.

3. *The Testament of our Lord*[1] professes to contain the will or testament which our Lord spake on the evening of His resurrection to His apostles, with whom were Mary and Martha and Salome. As a Church Order it appears to have been particularly influential in the process which later led to the formation of the Ethiopic and Coptic Service-books. Harnack dates it about A.D. 400; so do Bishop Wordsworth and Batiffol. Cooper and Maclean, however, who are the best authorities on all pertaining to the *Testament*, put its date at A.D. 350, the same date as the Apostolic Constitutions; so, too, does Zahn. It was written in Syria or in Asia Minor, and may be regarded as the chief representative of the early Eastern Church Orders. The instructions for the Agape (Book ii. § xiii.) appear in connexion with the Paschal solemnities, and

[1] I have used Cooper and Maclean's edition of the *Testament*. But cf. also Dr. W. E. Collins's article in *Encyc. Brit.*

specially with those of Maundy Thursday, the anniversary of the Last Supper of our Lord :

' In the supper or feast let those who have come near together receive (a portion?) thus, from the Shepherd as for a blessing, but let not a catechumen receive.

' If any one be of the household of, or related to one who is a teacher of heathenism, let him not accord with him and give praise with him; also let him not eat with him, because of relationship or for concord, lest he deliver ineffable things to a wolf (cf. Acts xx. 29) and he receive judgement.

' Let those who are called with the bishop to the house of one who is faithful eat with gravity and knowledge, not with drunkenness or to debauchery, and not so that he who is present may laugh, or so as to annoy the household of him that called him ; but so let him enter that he who called them may pray that the saints may enter into his house. For ye are the salt of the earth, as ye have heard ' (cf. the parallel passage in the *Can. Hip.*).

' Because (*sic* text) when they eat, let them eat abundantly, but so that there may be left over both for you and also for those to whom he that called you wisheth to send, so that he may have them as foods (fem.) left over (mas.) by the saints, and that he may rejoice at that which remaineth over.

' Let those who come to a feast, being called, not

stretch out a hand before them that are elder, but let the last eat (or, " let them eat last ") when the first shall have done.

' Let not those who eat strive (Syriac, " be offended ") in speech, but let them eat in silence; but if any one desire, or the bishop or presbyter ask (a question), let him return answer.

' But when the bishop saith a word, let every one quietly praising (him) (or, " giving praise ") choose silence for himself until he also be asked (a question).'

A later passage in the *Testament* which refers to the solemnities of the Easter Saturday night vigils says (xix.) :

' Let the catechumens first be dismissed, having received blessings (εὐλογίαι) from the bread which is broken. When the faithful are dismissed let them go in order and knowledge to their houses. In their feasts [Agapae, Cooper and Maclean say] let them not forget the prayers. . . . Let the widows stay till dawn in the temple, having food there. Let the virgins (fem.) abide together in the temple, and let the bishop help and provide for them, and let the deacons minister to them. Let the presbyteresses stay with the bishop till dawn, praying and resting. Similarly also those who were lately baptized. Let virgins who are ready for marriage go, cleaving to their mothers. This is thus fitting ' (pp. 133–134).

There is still another reference to the Agape in the *Testament*, the only one apart from the Easter celebrations. It is found in a Daily Hymn of Praise: 'We sing to Thee a triple hymn of praise from our hearts, O Lord, who givest life . . . the Protector of widows, the Liberator of orphans, who gavest to Thy Church a right government, and has founded in it Love-feasts,' &c. Dr. Keating (p. 125) attempts to make out a case for this being a reference to funeral Agapae, but the case is not at all proved.

On the whole, the references to the Agape in *The Testament of Our Lord*, though bulking largely, do not amount to much, so far as being evidence. We gather, however, that it had become customary for some host to invite the Christians to an Agape, and that at times heathen themselves were welcomed to the meal. (Else why should the writer repudiate it?)[1] The bishop, too, is apparently essential for the holding of such a meal.

4. *The Gnomes or Maxims of the Nicene Synod* is scarcely to be classed in importance with the three preceding documents; nevertheless it is a kind of Church Order, and contains some valuable evidence regarding the Agape, and has, therefore, a right to

[1] Of course, the relatives of heathen teachers may themselves have been Christians! If they were, I cannot imagine any principles on which they should be excluded.

be included in this category. It exists in two Coptic MSS., probably translated from Greek. It makes no effort to initiate a liturgy, but rather takes the existence of an established liturgy for granted. The author takes up his pen because he feels that the strength of the 'first love' has waned. Superstition has grown, and so has vanity among so-called Christians. The church services are but indolently followed, and the Agapae are not worthily celebrated. He feels it his duty, therefore, to call men to repentance and their 'first works,' and he has no compunction about calmly ascribing his work to the great Council at Nice. The name at least will gain a reading for his book, in spite of the literary inexactitude. He preaches against women who put lamp-black on their eyebrows, and against men who shave. Female ascetics and virgins ought not to use a mirror, and must not even wash their faces. He complains, too, that the Agapae are often regarded as banquets, and says that some have been known to come drunken to the Mysteries.[1]

The reference is interesting, because it shows us that in some part of Egypt, from which the document came, there were churches in A.D. 400 (?) where the Agape and the Eucharist (μυστήριον) were still associated, the Agape coming first.

Before leaving this portion of the subject, I must

[1] See H. Achelis in *Journ. of Theol. Stud.*, vol. ii., pp. 121–129.

refer to one of the most interesting documents of the Church Order type that has come down to us, the so-called *Pilgrimage of St. Silvia.*[1] St. Silvia was a Spanish lady, who made a long pilgrimage to Jerusalem about A.D. 385, and wrote down in minute detail all she saw and heard at the church services. Though she was present at and describes carefully the Maundy Thursday celebrations in Jerusalem, she has not a word to say about an Agape or any common meal even on that day. Indeed, she says that after 'mass' 'each one hastens to return home, that he may eat, for as soon as they have eaten they all go up to Olivet.'

It is just possible that she, being a woman and a stranger, was not admitted to all the existing ceremonies; but that would apply least of all to an Agape, and the only conclusion to which I can come is that the Agape was not celebrated in Jerusalem, its birth-place, in A.D. 385, even on the one day of the year on which one might expect it most.

One further reference may be made in this connexion. Tommasius has published a *Libellus Orationum et Precum,* called usually the *Orationale.* The third part of this volume deals with the Daily Office. The editor has there gathered together from different MSS. a large number of prayers, but of their

[1] See Duchesne, *Christian Worship,* but specially Archbishop Bernard's *Pilgrimage of St. Silvia,* p. 61.

origin he gives no record. Several of the prayers referred to the celebration of the Agape, but in general the Agape contemplated is some means of giving alms to the poor (*Oratio ad Agapen Pauperum*).

XIV

AGAPE RITES AND USAGES

Out of the mass of material concerning the Agape that has come down from the early centuries, in spite of the variations of usage in different localities and times, there are certain general observances and practices which may now be gathered together. The main questions to be asked are, What food was eaten at the Agape? How was it provided? How was the meal arranged? At what time was it held? Where did it meet? Was it linked up with the Eucharist? When Agape and Eucharist were held together, which came first? At what period were they separated? Or, in brief, we want to find out the materials, the method, the time and place, and the ritual of the Agape.

As to the materials of the Agape, the evidence is fairly clear. The Didache speaks of a cup of wine and some bread. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla*

(par. 25) refer to five loaves of bread, with vegetables and salt. Augustine at a later date speaks of meat, poultry, cheese, milk, and honey (*Contra Faustum*, xx. 20). In the Catacombs nearly every picture of an Agape shows loaves and fishes. Two of these materials are of special interest. Fish was the staple food of the Romans of old as of the Italians to-day; but it was more particularly popular with Christians at their Agape, by reason of the strange symbolism which saw in the word 'Ichthus' a mnemonic for the Lord Himself. The reference to honey is also of interest. Honey in ancient times was considered to have a peculiarly sacred character. The bee was supposed to be a special emblem and model of chastity. It was commonly held that the bee begot her young without losing her virginity.[1] This sacred sense, then, may have attached to the use of honey in the Agape; but there was also the need for some drink other than wine, when men feared the evils of intoxication, and honey mixed with water may well have taken the place of fermented wines on the occasion of the Agape in certain churches.

Augustine gives us important light on the subject. He tells[2] how the people were gathered in the Church of Hippo on January 21, on the occasion of the festival of several martyrs. The celebrations

[1] See Lecky, *Hist. Europ. Morals*, vol. i., p. 108 n., for authorities.
[2] Augustine, *Serm.* 273 c. viii.

seem to have consisted in drinking wine and eating cooked meats, and the preacher adds, dryly, 'and the martyrs smelled your bottles (*lagenas*), the martyrs smelled your frying-pans (*sartagenas*), the martyrs smelled your sobriety' (*sobrietates*). It is the same author who tells[1] the story, already referred to,[2] how his mother Monica, when she arrived at Milan, prepared for the festival of the saints a basket full of provisions of which she intended to eat a little and distribute the remainder. These included wine, and bread, and a sort of porridge. But already in the Italian churches these meals had been condemned. The verger at the door of the church refused to allow her provisions in, for Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, had prohibited all Agapae, because they were too like the pagan Parentalia, and had given rise to serious evils. One cannot help regretting that the innocuous honey and water had not been in more general use in the Agape. Some of the awful things which the writers of the fourth century have to say against it and its debauchery would not then have been possible. On the whole we can see that the Agape must have been in every sense a real meal, at which the church family met in social intercourse, and partook of ordinary food.

The supply of the necessary victuals was, as we know from the New Testament, provided by every

[1] Augustine, *Confess.* vi. c. 2. [2] See p. 184.

one bringing of their substance. The Church accepted contributions in money and in kind. Following the usage of the Roman Collegia, the Church adopted the use of an Agape treasure-chest, called the *arca*, in which the contributions (*stips*) were placed. In most of the Collegia there was a fixed *stips* for each member, but in the Church each was expected to give as the Lord had prospered him. Tertullian tells us how the money was expended: 'It is, so to speak, a *depositum* of piety, for it is not applied to feasts and drinking bouts, but to the support or the interment of the poor, the bringing up of boys and girls who have neither property nor parents, the relief of the aged, the shipwrecked, and those who are in the mines, in prison, or in exile.'[1]

Cyprian, however, calls the treasure-chest of the church a *corbona*, a name also ascribed to it in the Apostolic Constitutions.[2] The word 'corbona' carries us back to the 'Corban' of Mark vii. 11, and indicates the dependence of the Agape in some particulars on Jewish originals. In the Corban of the Agape only money and small valuables could be

[1] *Apolog.* c. xxxix.

[2] Cyprian, *Ep.* 64; *Apostol. Const.* ii. 36. Up to recent times the most common name of the Eucharist in the Coptic Churches was the Korban, the name applying rather to the offlete than to the act of offering. 'The Korban is administered by a spoon, the custom being to put the wafer into the wine, and to administer both kinds together' (A. J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, vol. ii., pp. 40, 275).

put. But there was a different kind of gift brought by the devout; it was the gift of natural produce, called 'oblations' (προσφορά). At first these oblations were used at the evening common meal, which was an Agape and a Eucharist combined. It was so down to the beginning of the second century; but when about that period the Eucharist became a morning act, a new division had to be made. They were then divided into two and sometimes three parts. First of all there was the bread and wine necessary for the Eucharist. Then there were goods and money which were necessary for the support of the worship and the ministry. There was, thirdly, an amount of food to be utilized in the Agape and given away to the poor members. That the gifts of the members of the Church were not small we know from several sources. Cyprian (*Ep.* 62) gives particulars of one collection. Many Christians having been made prisoners of war in Numidia, the bishops of that country applied for help to Cyprian, who appointed a collection, which yielded 100,000 HS. (£877).

As to the time at which the Agape was generally held, we can reach a fairly definite conclusion. Pliny said that the Christians met on a fixed day (*stato die*), which naturally would be the first day of the week. He also said that they met before daylight (*ante lucem*), and it was likely that in days

of persecution they would meet as unobtrusively as possible. Tertullian shows how the Agape proceeded through the night; and when the Eucharist came to be celebrated in the morning, in pursuance of the desire for fasting communion, it still remained the custom to hold the Agape before daylight. Later, too, when persecution came to an end, and it was no longer necessary for Christians to hide themselves from the face of their fellow citizens, the habit did not cease. The night hour was popular with Christians for several reasons. It was a favourite habit with Old and New Testament saints to use the night for devotion. Round about them there was the superstition that spirits walked abroad, and if there were spiritual peril of that kind at hand, better be up and facing it in the fellowship of other Christians! Most influential reason of all, the Lord had risen 'very early in the morning while it was yet dark,' and the early Church expected that He would come again even as He had gone, suddenly, 'as a thief in the night,' for the bringing in of His Kingdom. It therefore behoved loyal followers of the Lord to watch as the Wise Virgins did, waiting for their Lord with lamps trimmed and burning. There is no need to multiply references to this matter, but it is permissible to quote two brief passages. The pagan opponent of Christianity who was answered by Minucius Felix

cavils at the 'ante-lucan' habits of the Christians, and calls them a 'skulking generation, mute in public but garrulous in dark corners.'[1] Tertullian in a well-known passage remonstrated with Christian women for marrying heathen husbands, and adds a pertinent argument, 'What heathen husband will be willing to allow his wife to rise from his side to go to these nocturnal assemblies?'[2]

Of course, in the later days when the ordinary Agape disappeared and its place was taken by feasts for the poor and commemorative Agapae, there died also these midnight customs. Certainly when Monica went to the cathedral at Milan expecting to find an Agape in progress it was in the ordinary hours of the day, we gather from the story. In the Church Orders we have seen also the insistence on the rule that the widows should be sent home before dark.

I do not know that much can be said regarding the musical portion of the Agape. In Alexandria, where Jewish music and Greek would be bound to become fused, we know that both harp and flute were in use in Love-feasts. Clement, as we have seen, objected to the flute, but not to the harp. Bishop Wordsworth (*Ministry of Grace*, p. 198)

[1] Also cf. Celsus's accusation against the Christians of doing things in secret.

[2] Tertullian, *Ad Uxor.* ii. 4, and cf. also Tertullian, *De Corona Militis* 3, 'antelucanis coetibus eucharistiam sumimus,' &c.

suggests that the flute was proscribed as ministering too much to the passions, and intimately connected with the dangerous associations of the theatre.

In Carthage both Cyprian and Tertullian make reference to the music of the Agape. Tertullian says (*De Jejunio*, p. 13), 'Hoc tu psallere non facile nosti, nisi quo tempore cum compluribus coenas.'

Cyprian, in a letter to Donatus already quoted (p. 110), says, 'Let the sober meal resound with psalms. . . . You will provide a better entertainment for your dearest friends if, while we have something spiritual to listen to, religious music soothes our ears.'

Bishop Wordsworth is very happy in his suggestion that at the Agape, when they joined together in the singing of psalms, they were almost sure to choose such a psalm as the one hundred and thirty-third, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'

A few words will be sufficient to deal with the place at which the Agape was generally held. The 'upper room' was at first the meeting-place of the apostles. This was probably a room provided by Mary, the mother of John Mark, but as the circle of discipleship widened they ate bread daily from house to house. Towards the end of the first century, when congregations were becoming larger, they had to consider the provision of more commodious

buildings.[1] Whatever places of assembly were used, the Agape seems to have been an integral part of their purpose.[2] Later on, when the Agape developed into a funeral feast, it became the custom, particularly in Africa, to hold Agapae at the tombs. In Rome, at an earlier period owing to persecution, almost all worship, including the Agape, seems to have been conducted in the Catacombs, where there are still to be seen a number of *cubicula* for funerary banquets. Apparently the customs of the Roman Collegia gave rise to various 'Scholae sodalium Christianorum.' Specially is this so in the case of the Hypogeum of Domitilla.[3]

One of the most interesting problems connected with the Agape is its relation to the Eucharist. There is, of course, no doubt that the two were connected at first. All worship on the Lord's day was probably united when Christians were few in number; the days of specialization had not yet set in as regards church services. Of this connexion between Agape and Eucharist, Ignatius is a witness

[1] The earliest trace we find of buildings set apart exclusively for Christian worship comes from the beginning of the third century (202–210). Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* vii. 5) speaks of a building erected in honour of God, while he insists that it is the assembly of the people and not the place where they assemble that ought to be called the church.

[2] In 1 Cor xi. 18, it is said that the meal was held ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, but these words probably only mean 'in meeting assembled.'

[3] Cabrol gives an illustration of it.

as regards Antioch, Pliny is a witness for Bithynia, and the Didache for Alexandria. This, however, was only true up to the end of the second century. About that date—a little later in the East, a little earlier in the West—the two ordinances were separated. In the period, for instance, for which Tertullian is our witness the connexion had ceased, for he says (*De Corona*, iii.) that the Lord instituted the sacrament on the occasion of a meal, but the Church does not now so celebrate it. The causes of that separation we can easily discern.

1. The normal tendency of fierce persecution was to make Christians value very highly the brotherly intercourse of the common meal; but there was a different result of persecution in Bithynia, as we learn from Pliny's letter to Trajan already quoted. He tells of the first assembly at which the Christians bind themselves with an oath (*sacramentum*) not to commit sins which he enumerates; then in the well-known passage he proceeds, 'When this assembly was finished (I learn) that it was their custom to separate, and later on to come together again for the purpose of taking food in each other's company, food which was quite harmless; but they ceased doing this by my orders when I compelled them to obey your law about associations.' It is quite clear that it was the Agape the Christians of Bithynia gave up in obedience to the imperial

law, and not the Eucharist, though Pliny has probably made a mistake in the way he expresses the fact.[1] We can well understand that now and again the imperial law against clubs would make it quite impossible for Christians to carry on the Agape, and that it would give way in order to ensure the safety of the Eucharist in other places as it did in Bithynia.

2. When, too, persecution began to slacken, the same need for Agapae was not felt. It then became possible for Christians to buy meat that was not idol-branded, and to live the Christian life without undue interference. Further, church life was beginning to become more highly organized. For one thing, church services were tending to become ritualized and specialized. There was no need, for instance, to hold an ordination in conjunction with the usual Sunday worship, or to join an Agape with a Eucharist.

3. Also there arose a growing recognition of the incongruity between the entertainment and often the hilarity of the Agape and the chastened solemnity of the Eucharist. We can see how this incongruity struck St. Paul. His indignation against the church at Corinth for the abuses of the Lord's Table was concerned with the greediness and drunkenness which had marred the worship of the Church. Dr. Keating well sums up the case as follows:

[1] See Ramsay, p. 219, and Keating, pp. 54–56.

'In this state of things a true Lord's Supper became impossible. If the commemorative rite was not altogether given up, it was grossly neglected. The feeling for it was lost, the order probably thrown into confusion; so much so that St. Paul has to remind his converts of the very institution and formula of the rite. And the degeneracy seems to him so serious that he regards the prevailing sickness, and possibly even mortality ("some sleep"), in the Church as a punishment for it. The remedies he enjoins are that the meal itself should be thoroughly social, and that whosoever was too hungry to wait for the others should satisfy his hunger at home. . . . In the difficulties with which St. Paul had to contend, as here described, we find what are commonly believed to be the earliest known reasons for the eventual separation of the Agape from the Eucharist.'

4. To complete that separation, still another force was at work. Very early in Church History we find growing a desire for morning communion. Cyprian argues (*Ep. ad Caecilium*, concerning the Mixed Chalice) that since in the Eucharist they celebrate the completion of the Atonement, the resurrection of the Lord, which took place in the morning, they should therefore keep to the practice of morning communion. After a little time the notion of fasting communion also arose, and soon

became a widespread usage. The first writer to allude to this custom is Tertullian, in the passage (*Ad Uxor.* ii. 5) already quoted, 'Will not your husband know what it is you secretly take before other food?' and also, 'Who will without anxiety endure her absence all night long at the Paschal solemnities? Who will without some suspicion of his own let her go to attend that Lord's banquet which they defame?' The reference is probably to a private reservation of the Eucharist by the Christian wife of a heathen husband; but Tertullian does not hint that there was any novelty in the usage. The usage seems to have been to hold the Eucharist on the morning of the Lord's day and the Agape on the evening of the same day. That at least is the statement made by the author of the *Canons* of Hippolytus, who says it began at the time of the lamp-lighting. This statement, of course, is not reconcilable with that already quoted from the historian Socrates, who said that in Alexandria Jewish usages had so largely coloured the Christian rites that the ordinary worship was held on Saturday and the Agape and Eucharist on the same evening. But there is every reason to think that the Christian usages in Alexandria were far from being normal.

We may, therefore, sum up the matter as follows: In Eastern Christendom the Agape and Eucharist

were generally combined up to about the end of the second century, but in Western Christendom the separation had taken place at least a generation earlier. In different localities, however, the usage varied considerably. That variation of usage might well be illustrated from the history of the Agape in Alexandria and its neighbourhood, where the Agape is quite a knotty problem, largely owing to the curious evidence of three great writers, Clement, Chrysostom, and Socrates. While Clement leaves us in no doubt regarding the existence of the Agape in Alexandria, he is, on the other hand, very far from answering the other question, Was the Eucharist joined to the Agape? Indeed, the problem presented by Clement's writings on this point is difficult to solve. This is largely due to his use of mystical allusions and the general obscurity of his language.

Dr. Bigg[1] thinks that in the time of Clement the Eucharist and the Agape were still united as in the primitive days, though he hesitates to be dogmatic on the point. He sees that they were being separated in Asia, Carthage, and Europe, but thinks that Alexandria had clung longer to the primitive usage. He holds that there were two forms of the Agape in North Africa. The first was the public Agape (δημώδης ἑστίασις of Clement, *Paed.* ii. 1–12). At this a

[1] Rev. Charles Bigg, D.D., Bampton Lecture, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, pp. 102–106.

bishop or a presbyter generally presided, and it was held on fixed evenings in the church. The second was the private Agape, which was little more than an ordinary house supper (*Paed.* ii. 10, 96, and *Strom.* vii. 7, 49). No presbyter can have been present in the vast majority of cases; the devotional exercises of the family and the thanksgiving constituted a sacred meal.

'All that Clement says on this subject is of the highest value for those who wish to recast for themselves a faithful image of the church life at the end of the second century. But of all his phrases the most important are those which assure us that the ordinary evening meal of a Christian household was in a real sense an Agape. It was preceded by the same acts of worship, it was blessed by a thanksgiving. It was a true Eucharist. The house father is the house priest. The highest act of Christian devotion is at the same time the simplest and most natural. Husband, wife, and child, the domestic slave and the invited guest, gathered round the domestic board to enjoy with thankfulness the good gifts of God, uplifting their hearts in filial devotion, expanding them in brotherly love and kindness.'

Dr. Allen[1] follows the lead of Dr. Bigg, and believes that Clement spoke only of an Agape

[1] Dr. Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 522.

and Eucharist combined, but, on the other hand, Dr. Keating[1] takes the opposite view. The latter quotes several passages in which the Eucharist is referred to, while no mention is made of the Agape.[2] He also points out that Clement speaks quite separately of irregularities and abuses with regard to the Eucharist and the Agape. One set of heretics, for instance, the Carpocratians, are condemned for their immoralities in connexion with the Agape, whereas in another place he speaks of 'those heretics (the Encratites) who employ bread and water in the oblation.'

Over against these facts must be set the opposite facts that Clement has sometimes a way of using the word 'Eucharist' in its original untechnical sense of 'giving thanks,' and, further, that it is quite possible to predicate separate blemishes in the two ceremonies at Alexandria without their being held at separate times. Dr. Keating does not press his conclusion too hardly, but only says that the general impression left on his mind is that in Clement's time the Agape and the Eucharist had been sundered in and around Alexandria.

It is certainly a pity that Clement's evidence is

[1] Dr. Keating, chapter iii., pp. 79–93. Mayor on the same point is doubtful (note on *Strom.* vi. 382); and Zahn is strongly of the opinion held by Dr. Keating. See *E.R.E.*[3], 'Agapen,' 234. See also *D.C.G.*, 'Lord's Supper.'

[2] *Miscellanies*, I., i. 5, xix. 96; *Paedag.* ii. 2–19; *Strom.* vi. 14, 113, &c.

not a little more precise on this point; but it is quite clear that there was an Agape in very general use in Eastern Africa in the second century, and that at the beginning of the third century it was being treated with that familiarity which breeds contempt, and which is the sure prelude to decay of reverence. If in Clement's time the two ordinances were combined, it was only a few years later that we find them distinct and separate. Later we shall have to see how the evidence of St. Chrysostom affects the question of the Alexandrian Agape. For the moment the main point is clear, that Agape and Eucharist were generally combined up to the end of the second century.

Another important question still remains to be answered: When the Agape and Eucharist were conjoined, which of them came first? There is no doubt that at our Lord's Last Supper there was a common meal, which was generally looked on by the apostles as an Agape, followed by the institution of the Holy Communion. The passage in 1 Cor. xi., also, clearly implies that twenty-five years later St. Paul had established in the Grecian city a service in which the Agape preceded the Eucharist. Against this evidence it is sometimes urged that the opposite order is indicated in Acts xx. 11, where, after the Eutychus incident, it is said, 'And when he (Paul) had gone up and broken the bread, and had eaten,

and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.' It is contended that the 'breaking of bread' is the Eucharist, and the 'eating and talking' represent the Agape which followed. This puts far too much pressure on what is after all only a simple narrative, with no technical intention. When we remember that it is St. Paul who presides at the feast, it is hardly likely that with his keen sense of order he would have tolerated any deviation from his well-established usages. If he had even considered that the order was immaterial, we can well imagine that his reply and rebuke to the Corinthians might have taken a very different line from what it did. He would naturally have said to them, 'Since some are so gluttonous and drunken at the Agape that there can be no worthy celebration of the Holy Communion afterwards, you had better change the order and have the solemn service first, when men can be quiet and chastened in spirit.' But St. Paul apparently knew of no other order than the Agape succeeded by the Eucharist. It is, therefore, most likely that in the passage quoted from Acts the 'breaking of bread' and 'eating' are portions only of the same series of acts, implying an Agape and a Eucharist combined, without discriminating nicely between them as to which came first.

The Didache is likewise a witness for the same

order, and directs that the Thanksgiving (Eucharist) should be offered ' after being filled ' (i.e. after the Agape meal).

The *Canons* of Hippolytus, in giving directions for the celebration of commemorative Agapae, say (§ 169) :

> ' Before they sit down (to the Agape) let them first partake of the Mysteries, not, however, on the first day (of the week).'

The meaning is somewhat ambiguous. These words appear to imply that a memorial Agape must always begin with the Eucharist, except when it was held on Sundays, the suggestion perhaps being that the morning Communion of Sunday need not be repeated later in the day before an Agape. If that meaning were clear and could be maintained, it would be a valuable contribution to this discussion, for it would be a distinct statement that at funeral Agapae in Rome the Eucharist came first. But this is not a possible meaning unless we can also grant that at such a Eucharist and Agape conjoined the presence of neither bishop nor priest was essential, and that even on occasions a layman could conduct the feast and the sacrament (Rule 181) under certain restrictions. I am convinced, therefore, that whatever may be the meaning of ' primum antequam consideant mysteria

sumant, neque tamen die prima' it cannot mean that the Eucharist preceded the Agape in Christian memorial feasts. The only suggestion I have to offer is that this is one of the many corruptions of the text which has not yet been corrected and explained.[1]

Pliny's letter seems to imply that the two were separated in Bithynia in A.D. 112, and that the Eucharist came first. But we have already questioned Pliny's accuracy in this matter. He had not the technical knowledge necessary to enable him to set down correctly the distinction between Agape and Eucharist, and therefore we cannot be sure what was the usage in Bithynia in his time.

When we come to the *locus classicus* of the Agape, Tertullian's *Apology*, there is no mention of the two being combined at all.

Our question, therefore, as to the order of the two ceremonies, so far as it applies to the Western Christendom, only applies to the first stage of Agape history, before A.D. 200; and the answer must be that during the period when the Agape and Eucharist were combined there was in the West generally the apostolic usage of having the common meal first and the Eucharist afterwards.

From the first, the varieties of usage in Eastern

[1] The parallel passage in the Apostolic Constitutions omits the reference to the Mysteries.

Christendom were many. As we have already seen, long after the original Agape had disappeared from the West it existed and flourished in the East, but mostly as a separate institution. Concerning the early period and the relative order, there is every reason to think that the Agape uniformly preceded the Eucharist. Account has, however, to be taken of the statement given by St. Chrysostom in the passage already referred to from his Homilies, 'After the communion of the Mysteries, all the people went to a common entertainment, the rich bringing their provisions with them, and the poor and the destitute being invited by them, and all feasting in common; but afterwards this custom became corrupt.' Of course, Chrysostom is speaking in this passage not as an ecclesiastic but as an antiquarian, and he had not at all as good a chance of knowing the truth concerning one hundred and fifty years previous to his day as we have to-day. He was, probably, quite wrong concerning the order of the primitive service, unless it were that in some parts of Asia they celebrated an Agape from an early period, in which the Eucharist came first. But of that we have no knowledge, and it is not very likely.

On the whole, therefore, it is plain that the Agape and Eucharist were united till about the beginning of the second century, and that the Agape preceded

the Eucharist.[1] This was looked on as apostolic, so that when changes were necessary owing to the increased licence at the common meal, it was thought most in harmony with ancient usages to separate the two completely rather than to change their relative order. The larger question of the ritual of the Agape may well be left to another chapter.

[1] Referring to the theory of Mr. Box, previously mentioned (p. 42), the Rev. J. C. Lambert, B.D., in the *Journ. of Theol. Stud.* iv. 190, says, 'As for the view that originally the Eucharist took place at the beginning and not at the end of the common meal, it may safely be affirmed that the New Testament gives little support to it, and that it finds hardly any favour at the hands of historical scholars.'

XV

AGAPE RITES AND USAGES
(Continued)

In seeking to find out the various forms of ceremonial which grew up around the Agape, it has to be remembered that the Agape did not continue as a portion of the established worship of the Church up to the period when local liturgies became unified and crystallized into the great liturgies of Christendom. When that stage came the Agape had almost disappeared. But before that period arrived there was a long preparatory stage during which the evolution of Prayer-books was proceeding slowly by way of Church Orders and kindred documents. During this period the Agape was vigorous for a time in the Western Church, and shared to some extent in the attempt to establish ritual for all services of the Church. In the Eastern Churches

the Agape lived through the same evolutionary period, and in some cases persisted on into the period of established ceremonial.

In describing the usual method of procedure at a properly conducted Agape we have to depend on a comparatively small number of writings. The earliest author to give a reliable description of the procedure is Tertullian. But the Church Orders are also of great assistance, especially when they exhibit local variations of usage.

The method that I propose to follow in the case is to set down, as far as one can, the order of procedure at the apostolic Agape, and to show then how, as time went on, various additions to it and changes in it were made.

The Primitive Agape.

We can form a fair idea of the kind of common meal out of which the Agape sprung by seizing on the chief features in the narrative of the Last Supper, and keeping in view the general usage of Jews at similar meals. The order would be something as follows :

Washing of hands.
Recline at feast.
Food blessed by person presiding.
Loaf broken and distributed.

Discourse, and conversation on spiritual topics.
(Eucharistic portion of meal) (?).
Singing of a psalm (cf. Matt. xxvi. 30).

Those present: Only the apostles and the Lord. Even the ' goodman of the house ' was not admitted.

The whole procedure was very simple and homely. The discourse and prayers were probably extempore, and altogether the meal was spontaneous and free. In different homes it would differ in arrangement, and on one great occasion a very real Agape was prepared by the hands of the Lord Himself, and provided on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias early in the morning. Perhaps it was usual in certain cases to add to the ceremony some form of the Pedilavium, or feet-washing. The essential parts, however, of the ceremony were the Fraction, Benediction, and Distribution of the Bread.

The Apostolic Agape.

After the ascension of the Lord the common meal provided a suitable time for fellowship, encouragement, and exhortation, and also for the ordinary business of the church. It therefore became of greater length, and acquired new features, something as follows:

Presided over by an apostle, bishop, or presbyter
Food brought by guests, or provided by a host.

Washing of hands.
Prayers.
'Scriptures' read.
Bread blessed.
Bread broken (κλάσις or κλάσμα).
Questions proposed by person presiding.
Probably a sermon.
Recital of accounts from other churches.
Reception of visitors with letters of commendation.
Collection of money for poor, orphans, widows, prisoners.
Kiss of Charity, and perhaps the Pedilavium.
Psalm or hymn.
(Eucharist either followed or was incorporated with it.)

It must be said at once that there is no direct evidence for such a form of service. It was a period of transition which gave practically no literature to the world except what is in the New Testament, and we can only surmise the changes that were almost certain to take place. The form suggested, then, would probably represent the kind of Agape of which St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and which was referred to by St. Jude and in the Second Epistle of St. Peter. Those present would naturally be only the baptized members of the church. Women were probably admitted, but from the beginning and even to the end of the Agape history they seem to

have taken their meal at different tables from the men.

Tertullian's Agape.

Passing over the Epistles of Ignatius and the Didache, both of which refer to the Agape, but with no particularity, we come to the first great post-apostolical description of the Agape. It occurs in the *Apology* of Tertullian.[1] As Tertullian became a Montanist about A.D. 200, his testimony regarding the Agape must have been written before that date, and it is usually calculated that Tertullian spoke of an Agape in Carthage about the last decade of the second century.

The Agape in the time of Tertullian was no longer connected with the Eucharist. The former was held in the evening (cf. the reference to lights), and the latter was held in the morning. It is also certain that there was a considerable amount of spontaneity in the conduct of the Love-feast in Tertullian's time, and the order given by him cannot be taken as being more than a picturesque description; it is certainly not a ritual prescription for the meal. It may be summarized as follows:

Approved elders preside (*seniores probati*).
Collection for poor, &c.
Prayer (standing).

[1] The full description has been quoted above, pp. 98–101.

Recline at feast.
' Conversations.'
Water for hands.
Lights for hall.
Public song and testimony.
Prayer and departure.

There are not many differences between Tertullian's Love-feast and that known to the apostles, the one great divergence that had taken place in the hundred and sixty years of the Agape history being the separation of the Eucharist from the Agape. In the list of items of ceremonial one misses the Fraction, Benediction, and Distribution of the Bread. It is not at all likely, however, that these three essential features of the Agape had dropped out of use; he seems to take them for granted, as if it were not necessary to explain them to the outsider to whom he writes his *Apology*.

When Tertullian says that ' seniores probati ' could preside at the Love-feasts, does he mean to imply that laymen of good standing could be recognized as presidents of an Agape? I do not think that is involved in the words. He is writing for folk who did not understand, and who wilfully misunderstood at times, the elements of Christian usage. He therefore translates the Greek πρεσβύτεροι into the Latin ' seniores,' and to make the matter sure he adds the limiting term ' probati.'

Canons of Hippolytus.

We have seen that for the first hundred and sixty years of its existence the Agape met with little alteration. It was certainly not so during the following century of its existence, for it made progress in that period swiftly enough, and often in unworthy directions. When we come to look at it, about the year A.D. 250 we have evidence from two great sources—the *Canons* of Hippolytus and the Didascalia. In the *Canons* of Hippolytus one sees at once a considerable change in the nature of the Agape, for there have arisen three or four different types of Agape to be prescribed for. The rules and rites are as follows:

1. The ordinary Agape.

Held on Sunday evening.
A house meal with a host who invites.
Bishop presides.
Deacon lights the lamps.
Bishop prays over the host and guests.
Thanksgiving repeated from the Eucharist.
Feast.
Repeat psalms.
Men and women dismissed separately soon after darkness.

2. Agape for the poor.[1] (Same rules and usages as above.)

[1] I am here taking for granted that when the author of the *Canons* uses the word 'or' he means two different types. See p. 205

3. Memorial feasts for martyrs and the departed

Held after the Eucharist (? see p. 202).
Not held on Sundays.
Bishop or priest presides.
Oblation.
Bread signed with the Cross (bread of exorcism).
Bread distributed.
Catechumens get only bread that is blessed, not exorcised.
Catechumens must stand aside. Must not join others.
Discourse by bishop.

The question, too, had arisen, Could a layman preside at an Agape? and it had been decided that he had power to break and distribute the bread, but on no account must he sign it with the Cross. If no clergyman was there, each was to eat his portion modestly and go home.

4. Agape for widows.

Details are the same apparently as for an ordinary Agape, but above all things let the widows go home before dark.

It is clear that no one of these represents a complete Agape ritual. They rather give what appeared to the author of the *Canons* to be the salient points

Certain changes, however, had taken place since Tertullian's time. The benediction of the loaves is no longer a simple matter in which an extempore prayer was all that was required. Now there has to be the exorcism of those evil spirits which a superstitious age was beginning to dread. Then again, the usages regarding catechumens in the church have to be related to the Agape, and produce another type of rules. Further, there is growing up an insistence on the bishop being present, if the Agape is to be legitimate. His place might be filled on occasion by presbyter or deacon, but on no account must a layman make the sign of the Cross over the bread. It is also hinted that when a bishop was not present there was a tendency to abuse the meal, and the priest or deacon was not held in sufficient awe.

We have now before us the main formularies connected with the Love-feast, and we have seen how the changes in Christian life affected the meal. There are some other documents, however, that show a few interesting variations.

The *Didascalia* commands that the 'offerings' are to be given to the bishop either directly or through the deacon; and he will distribute equitably. This refers apparently to a prelude to the Love-feast, for the document then proceeds to give rules for the holding of Agapae for widows.

The *Testament of Our Lord* speaks of the person presiding as the ' Pastor ' or ' Shepherd,' and contains the usual clauses prohibiting catechumens from partaking. It is also stated that all who are relatives of teachers of heathenism are to be excluded. It is not at all clear whether the folk referred to were Christians or heathen; it may have been that the Church had gone so far as to admit heathen partakers into the fellowship of the Love-feast.

It is also laid down that when the Love-feast was over the remnants were to be collected for those (poor?) not present. The meal is one to which a wealthy host invites the guests; it is no longer a common meal in any true sense.

The *Egyptian Canons* are, as we have seen, only a local variant of the *Canons* of Hippolytus, but they contain one or two noticeable divergences. The catechumens are allowed to receive the exorcised bread, but they must not sit down at ' The Lord's Supper ' (*Coena Dominica*), i.e. the Agape. The common offering is termed the ' Apoforetum.'

The bishop proposes questions to those present, and they reply.

The *Egyptian Church Ordinances*, after describing the usual signing of the bread, add the information, ' This is Eulogia and not Eucharist, as if it were the Body of the Lord.'

These ordinances also state that ' if the laymen should meet without a clergyman, let them eat with knowledge (μετ' ἐπιστήμης), but a layman has no power to pronounce the blessing.' Lengthened reference is also made in this connexion to the Jewish habit of presenting first-fruits of the harvest, which had been adopted in connexion with the Christian Agapae, and instructions are given for presenting them to the bishop.

The evolution of a liturgy for the Agape is thus seen to have progressed to a certain point, and then to have come to a full stop when the Agapae themselves were banned from the Church by the bishops and Councils. The best summary of the typical Agape ritual is undoubtedly that given by the author of the tract *De Virginitate*, where the order is given in a few lines :

> After the synaxis of the ninth hour (3 p.m.).
> Make the sign of the Cross over the bread.
> Bless it, break it, eat it.
> Give thanks for the food.
> Do not allow catechumens to join.

In those rules is summarized the main ritual of the Agape wherever it existed at the end of the third century.

XVI

THE DOWNFALL OF THE AGAPE

Towards the end of the third century in Western Christendom, and a century later in the East, certain forces of decay and disruption began to have their way with the Love-feasts, and eventually left it wrecked on the shores of Church History. Before indicating the forces which accomplished this result, it is right to turn aside to estimate the value—the social value—of the Agape which was destroyed.

The social aspects of the Agape were of far-reaching extent in making early Christianity as democratic as it was. Masters and slaves were equal at the Eucharist and the Agape; but while the Eucharist was a very solemn occasion, during which such equality was on a somewhat mystic plane, there was a cordial fraternization, a neighbourly comradeship, peculiar to the Love-feast. The Agape, therefore,

was one of the first blows at slavery that Christian principles struck. Perhaps the actual beginning of the conflict was when St. Paul wrote to Philemon, concerning Onesimus, the runaway slave, 'Receive him no longer as a slave, but as a brother beloved, both to thee and me, both in the flesh and in the Lord.' Such an attitude as this must have been an inherent principle in the Love-feast; and we can be certain that nowhere else in the Roman world was there such a true type of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' as round the table of the Agape. That this was no mere theory is proved by the fact that slaves sometimes held important posts in the Church. In the third century a freed slave is known to have become Bishop of Rome.

An interesting corroboration of this equality comes from the Catacombs. In the Church of Rome there must have been a preponderance of slaves, and many of them must have received burial along with their more fortunate brethren in the great underground burial-places. Now among the multitude of inscriptions of the Christian dead in the Catacombs there are descriptions of men and women of all classes and trades, but in no single case that has come to light is any one mentioned as a slave. Many are called 'Slaves of Christ,' but at the table of the Agape, and when 'dust returned to dust,' all were brethren in Christ Jesus.

With such a spirit actuating Christians, it is no surprise to read of large sums of money being given by well-to-do Christians for the emancipation of their brethren who were in slavery (Cyprian, *Ep.* 62 c. ii.), and cases were not unknown where Christians sacrificed their own freedom in order to win liberty for their captive brethren (Clement of Rome, *Eps.* i. c. 55).

One other effect of the Agape must have been to bind the Christians together in a very strong league so far as business and politics went. We know from the ordinary history of Rome how powerful the Collegia proved at the time of the Catiline conspiracy. And in the later age, when the imperial power was ebbing and the Christian Church was steadily increasing, the solidarity of the Church stood it in good stead; for when the Emperor removed from Rome to Byzantium there was no one but the Bishop of Rome to take his place in the sentiment of the Italian populace, partly because of his probity, partly because of his spiritual eminence, partly because of his wealth and wisdom, but largely because he was at the head of a corporate body of men and women whose freemasonry was never so effective as when the bonds of empire were in dissolution. In this solidarity undoubtedly the strongest element was the brotherhood fostered at the Table of the Lord and at the Love-feast. It is a

tempting topic to pursue, therefore, how far the Agape and the elements of Christian life of which it was the expression were connected with that wonderfully progressive spirit which has made Western Europe the most powerful portion of the world.

A third matter in this connexion was the influence of the Agape on the charity of the Church. Mr. Lecky, dealing with this topic (*History of European Morals*, ii. 78, &c.), says:

'There can be no question that neither in practice nor in theory . . . did charity in antiquity occupy a position at all comparable to that which it has obtained by Christianity. Nearly all relief was a State measure, dictated much more by policy than by benevolence . . . but the actual habitual and detailed charity of private persons, which is so conspicuous a feature in all Christian societies, was scarcely known in antiquity. . . . Christianity for the first time made charity a rudimentary virtue, giving it a leading place in the moral type. . . . Even in the days of persecution, collections for the relief of the poor were made at the Sunday meetings. The Agapae, or feasts of love, were intended mainly for the poor, and food that was saved by the fasts was devoted to their benefit. . . . We may trace the remains of the pure socialism that marked the first phase of the Christian community in the emphatic language with which some of the Fathers

proclaimed charity to be a matter not of mercy but of justice, maintaining that all property is based on usurpation, that the earth by right is common to all men, and that no man can claim a superabundant supply of its goods except as an administrator for others.'

When one thinks of the very beautiful ceremony which illustrated and fostered this brotherly spirit, and remembers to what a depth of failure it descended, the story is one of real sadness, and almost tragedy

James Mill, the father of John Stuart Mill, on one occasion committed himself to a somewhat notorious suggestion for reforming Christian churches and religion in general. The clergy were to be utilized for giving little moral lectures, teaching the gospel of Benthamism. Sunday must be retained as a day of rest, with just sufficient amusement ' to promote cheerfulness rather than profuse merriment.' And he adds, ' A conjoint meal on Sunday would have the happiest effects, being a renewal of the Agapai—Love-feasts—of the early Christians, but with the exclusion of intoxicating liquors.'[1]

It is sometimes supposed that the Agape became extinct largely through a process of decay arising within itself. The death, however, was not altogether such a natural one. In some cases undoubtedly the septic poisoning of moral decay was

[1] *James Mill*, by Bain, pp. 387, 388.

the cause of death. In other cases, if what happened in Bithynia may be taken as a specimen of what obtained elsewhere in the Roman Empire, the death was hastened by external blows administered by the Imperial Government. But there were also cases where the ecclesiastical authorities of the time were responsible for giving the fatal stroke.

Of course, the external forces would never have killed the Agape if the internal health had been vigorous, but unfortunately that was not so. The 'spots in your feasts of charity' of which St. Jude wrote, and the abuses already showing themselves when St. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, grew worse and worse as generations went by. It is principally in Africa that we find indications of the terrible decay and degeneracy of the Agape in the fourth century. So gross and obscene at times did the disorders become that decent women refused to attend, and the pagan neighbours when asked to become Christians used to retort, 'Why should we leave Jupiter to prostitute ourselves before Mygdon?'[1]

There is no doubt but that often these scandalous accusations were totally without foundation; nevertheless, quiet and godly people were chary of being associated with places and movements which had become so notorious. And after all the Agapae were not altogether innocent. If there was no

[1] St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, xx. 121.

drunkenness, there was pride ; and if there was no licentiousness, there was jealousy and greed.

St. Jerome, to give a case in point, in a letter dated 384 (xxii. 32), complains that the Christian widows of Rome displayed a very considerable ostentation in their almsgiving (*cum ad agapen vocaverint praeco conducitur*).

The popular view of the purpose of the Agape was that it existed for social intercourse and for help in time of need. It has always been hard to make popular an abstract ideal like ' brotherliness,' and when, after a time, both the need for charity and for comradeship in the Church disappeared it seemed as if the very basis of the Agape was lost. For the need for social intercourse was not so great when persecution ended, and the call for charity was responded to by the new monastic institutions, by the large endowments of the churches, and in later days by a State grant from the Emperor.

Other minor causes, too, were at work in this internal decay. House-to-house Agapae became impossible with increasing numbers, and it was necessary somehow to obtain larger buildings. In the bareness and stiffness of a school or gymnasium the sense of brotherly love was not as real as in a more homely atmosphere. Altogether we can see how within the boundaries of the Agape itself such

disruptive forces existed and were active as were sure to co-operate with rather than oppose antagonistic forces from without.

And such exterior forces were also at work. The first arose from the Roman Government, the second from a growing ecclesiasticism.

So long as Rome was a Republic all citizens had the right of forming associations at will; but as soon as the Empire began it distrusted such associations. They had shown themselves far too powerful a factor in public elections to be quite safe. It was for this reason that Julius Caesar restricted them within the narrowest limits. Collegia and Sodalitates were brought under the imperial ban, and little by little were squeezed out of existence. The only classes of Collegia which were not obliterated were the benefit clubs and burial societies for the poor, and these generally had associated with them some religious ritual. Trajan was specially anxious, as we saw, to rid himself of all such organizations, and he seems to have considered that already Christianity had quite enough power. What Trajan did in regard to Bithynia may very naturally have been a precedent for other provinces and other governors than Pliny; and where the Christians were brought up against the law they would naturally prefer to drop anything, even the Agape, rather than have the central portion of their weekly

worship, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, disturbed.

The most potent of the forces antagonistic to the Agape arose, however, within the Church itself. The fourth and fifth centuries were the age which saw the rise and rapid development of the monastic ideal in the Church. It began in the East, but speedily, under Jerome's example principally, found firm footing in Western Christendom. There is no doubt that the monastic spirit was unfavourable to the Agape. The notion propagated was that if there were to be common meals they should be held inside the bounds of the inner brotherhood of monks ; if charity was to be controlled and administered, who could do so like those who had renounced the world and its gains ? We know that every new movement is extreme in its initial stages, and there is always a tendency among new disciples to be specially intolerant of anything that seems worldly, and enthusiastic in discovering fresh sins. Tertullian's life is an instance of this. Though he had previously written of the Agape in most glowing terms, yet when he became a Montanist he abused it with all the power of his lawyer's tongue. It is much more than a coincidence that the rise of Monasticism and the fall of the Agape synchronize. There is certainly a causal link between the two facts.

We have also to remember that the same period

as saw the rise of Monasticism saw also the birth of a deep interest in the ritual of the Church. The earliest of the great cathedrals were being built, service-books were being produced, and a new sense of fitness and arrangement in public worship was developing. It was only to be expected that people would soon get to recognize the incongruity between the Agape and ceremonial worship. The archaic simplicity of the Love-feast was irreconcilable with the solemn splendour and the stately offices of a Gothic or Byzantine building.

Further, as the power of the clergy increased in the Church, it became customary to insist on the presence of a priest or bishop at the Agape, as being necessary to make the supper valid. When the number of worshippers increased, this became more and more difficult, and specially so when the Agape was partaken of in private houses. Therefore we find that home Agapae were viewed as a menace to the unity of the Church, and were quietly discouraged by the authorities. The public Agapae followed. In Milan, Ambrose, without consultation with other sees (apparently), directed the public Agapae to cease. Augustine himself did the same in Hippo, and so the story goes on of Agapae ceased and ceasing, until at last in the Trullan Council (A.D. 692), under Justinian II, the seventy-fourth Canon briefly stated, 'The Agapae in churches

are forbidden.' In the manner sketched above, by a threefold complication of disease and injury—rottenness within, compulsion without, strong ecclesiastical opposition all round—died the Agape in the Western and in the greater part of Eastern Christendom. And as Uhlhorn concludes, 'Thus was an institution buried whose existence was as distinctive of the life of the ancient Church as its destruction is a sign that such a church life no longer exists.'

XVII

MODERN SURVIVALS OF THE AGAPE

In strange corners of the Eastern Church, and in churches where there was only imperfect communion with Constantinople or with Rome, the Agapae continued to be celebrated.

What appears to be a genuine survival of the Agape from primitive times is still found among the Christians of St. Thomas, who form, and have formed for centuries, a separate colony and church at Madras in Southern India. This church claims as its founder a certain St. Thomas, a martyr bishop of the third or fourth century. He has been confused more than once by Western writers with his apostolic namesake, because the Apocryphal *Acts* of St. Thomas state that he went into India after the destruction of Jerusalem. But the more reliable tradition is that the founder of this curious church

came with some presbyters of Jerusalem to Malabar in A.D. 345. Thence he is said to have gone to Mylapur, which is now a suburb of Madras. A shrine of the martyr was rebuilt by the Portuguese in 1547 on what is known as Mount St. Thomas, and there a miraculous cross is shown, with a Pahlavi inscription which may be as old as the seventh century. During all the intervening centuries this body of Christians has existed and held aloof from the neighbouring heathenism. For a time they were in formal union with the Roman see, and for a century and a half they were under Jesuit rule. How far, therefore, their usages and liturgy are original, and not the result of Jesuit influence, is difficult to say; but the fact that they have preserved a form of Agape seems to point to an apostolical tradition held safely for many centuries. It is now generally accepted that their founder was a Nestorian, who came possibly from Edessa; but while the explanation of their existence is one of the unsolved problems of Church History, the fact of their celebrating an Agape as an important portion of their worship is an interesting survival of the early Church use.[1]

The divisions of the Eastern Church are very numerous, and not a great deal is known about them

[1] See *Encyc. Brit.*, 'St. Thomas'; George Milne Rae, *The Syrian Church in India*; and Bishop Medlycott, *India and the Apostle Thomas* (wholly uncritical).

by English readers. There are about a score of main divisions: Copts, Armenians, Abyssinians, Syrians (Monophysites), Nestorians (dwelling east of Syria and about the Koordistan Mountains), Georgians, Maronites of Lebanon, Melchites, &c., with the branches of the Orthodox Greek Church. In addition there are such bodies as the Yezeedis of Mesopotamia and the Sabaeans of extreme Chaldaea, who retain a few Christian rites, but are completely degraded. In many of these 'side-tracked' forms of religion some relics of the Agape are still found, though it is not easy to get particulars of the mode of celebration. The Maronites, for instance, retain a form of common meal which is apparently the remains of an Agape.[1]

Riedel says, too, that 'the Agapae of apostolic times correspond with feasts which are still the

[1] In the Koran (Suratu'l Maida, chapter 5) there is a passage which seems to imply that Mohammed had become acquainted with the Agape. He says, 'Remember when the apostles said, "O Jesus Son of Mary is Thy Lord able to send down a furnished table to us out of heaven?" Jesus Son of Mary said, "O God, our Lord, send down a table to us out of heaven that it may become a recurring festival to us."' The Muslim commentators dealing with this passage are divided as to its meaning, but most of them say that a table was provided with many different kinds of food.

Very interesting customs akin to the Christian Agape are to be found among the Kizil Bash, or 'Red Heads,' a sect distributed throughout the whole of Asia Minor. Their religion is compounded from Mohammedan, Christian, and pagan sources, and they have common meals, held at night-time, which have given rise to accusations of debauchery. The Turks call them by a nickname that means 'extinguishers of the light.' Professor Franz Cumont gives an account of the usages in *E.R.E.*, vol. vii., pp. 744–5.

custom among the Christians of the Levant,' and he quotes Wanslehen, who says, ' They still have the custom of holding Agapes, or feasts of charity, after baptisms and funerals for all who wish to take part. Each is given a plate of soup with a morsel of meat, and as much bread as he can eat. These feasts are held either in the church itself, or on the roof of the church, which is, according to the custom of the Levantines, always flat, and capable of holding a large number of people.'[1]

The Abyssinian Church, among many curiosities of usage, still holds an Agape, or rather an Agape and Eucharist combined.

> ' It retains in full force various practices of the primitive Church which have long since fallen into desuetude elsewhere, e.g. abstinence from the flesh and blood of animals which have been strangled, baptism by immersion, the custom of administering the communion to little children under the species of wine, resting from work on the Sabbath, and the celebration of the Agape.'[2]

A description of their Communion is given by Adeney as follows :

> ' The services are conducted with chanting to no particular tune. There are prayers and psalms and

[1] Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*, quoted by Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*.
[2] Jean Baptiste Piolet, ' Abyssinia,' in *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

one lesson, all shouted, rather than intoned or merely read. The Mass begins with a shout of "Hallelujah," and concludes with a procession of four or five crosses, to an accompaniment of drums, cymbals, and incense, carried round the church quite thirty times. . . . The Communion is received by the laity as well as by the clergy in both kinds, the communicants, after receiving the cup, washing out their mouth with holy water and drinking it. Bread is blessed and distributed at all the monasteries and churches on the Saturday Sabbaths, on Sundays, and on feast-days.'[1]

This dispensation of food, as well as the corresponding distribution of bread to the poor after every Mass in the Russian Orthodox Church, is almost certainly a relic of Agape usages. It is a familiar sight to see the worshippers crowding up in lines to obtain the blessed bread. The name given to this bread by the Council of Antioch (341) is the 'Antidoron,' or 'Compensation.' In the Greek churches in Austria and Hungary the Antidoron is given less frequently, chiefly on the Saturday in Easter week. The frequency of the gifts, however, differs in different localities.

The canonical regulations of the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches require that an Antidoron should be consumed before leaving the church, and that it

[1] Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, pp. 622–3.

should not be distributed to unbelievers or to persons undergoing penance before absolution. The same customs of giving out 'pain bénit' occurs here and there in French churches and cathedrals at High Mass, and occasionally is found in parts of Italy. Chateaubriand says that the custom is a relic of the Agape.

In the country districts of Russia a sort of funeral Agape is still held. The priest or deacon presides, and forty or fifty beggars may be invited to share the charity. 'After dinner a waiter is brought in full of glasses, and a large tureen full of honey water. This is ladled out by the deacon, he and the priest singing all the time, and then handed by him to the company, who take a sip or two of the sickly beverage "in remembrance." '[1]

There are some other similar ceremonies that may all, in a sense, be considered survivals of the Agapae Funerales. But inasmuch as the funeral feasts were only partly connected with the primitive usages of the Agape, it is difficult to say how much of the modern customs have descended from the funeral Agape of the early Christians and how much from those archaic burial customs that held a large place in all primitive sociology. Two samples of the customs referred to may be mentioned, one of which has relationship to the Agape, and the other plainly has not.

[1] Romanoff, *Sketches of the Graeco-Russian Church*, p. 242, &c.

The Frisian population on the right bank of the Lower Weser have a typical funeral feast :

'They hurry home from the church to the house, where piles of cakes, long rows of wine bottles, clay pipes, plates of tobacco, matches, and cigars await the guests, and the feast begins. Hitherto stillness and whispering have reigned in the house. Now eating and drinking know no bounds. Soon the tobacco smoke fills the house until it is impossible to see three paces ahead ; all tongues are loosened ; chattering and jesting, laughing and drinking, the clinking of glasses, and the general good humour increase from hour to hour.'[1]

'The funeral meal is still, or was quite lately, in the cemetery at Argentière in the department of the Hautes Alpes, France, and the curé and the family of the deceased sat at a table placed on the grave itself. As soon as the meal was over, every one, led by the next of kin, drank to the health of the departed.'

Some resemblance to, and possibly a connexion with, the primitive custom of distributing the Eulogia at the Agape may be traced in the following examples : In Sardinia, on the seventh or ninth day after death, savoury cakes are prepared and sent hot from the oven to all relatives and neighbours, and to all who have joined in the funeral ceremonies ; but the funeral supper is confined to the immediate

family. At Gainsborough funeral loaves used to be given away at funerals to all who asked for them. In Ireland and in other Catholic countries it is customary to give lavish charity and entertainment to the ecclesiastics who have taken part in the ceremonies. The Irish 'wake,' however, has its antecedents in customs long anterior to the Christian Agape.

A usage which is apparently of Christian origin is found in some European countries of invoking blessing on the soul of the departed in connexion with the funeral feast. The following are good examples: 'In Bulgaria, at the meal taken before the funeral, every one before drinking pours a few drops of wine on the ground before the corpse and says, "God forgive the sins of N. N." After the burial the priest incenses the room, and then takes his place at the top of the table, saying, "God forgive N. N." During the meal, as the guests sit round the table, he from time to time says, "Eat and drink, and say, 'God forgive N. N.,'" and the guests accordingly respond in chorus.'

It is likely that we have here a relic of the funeral Agape, much changed, and far removed from the primitive custom, but with at least a trace of ancient Christian custom.[1]

[1] The particulars of these customs are taken from the article on 'Death and Burial' in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

Both the Georgian and Armenian Churches continue to this day to have funeral Agapae, at which a sheep is killed sacrificially, and, according to Mr. F. C. Conybeare,[1] the ritual in the old Iberian churches was the same as the Armenian. Archdeacon Dowling[2] says that

> 'To-day, in Georgia, the deacon who is chosen by the people slays the animal, usually a sheep, at the funeral banquet. The face, forehead, and nose of the animal are smeared with a red dye, tapers are lit, and tied to its horns with paper fillets. The animal licks the exorcised salt before it is slain.'

At the end of the liturgy of the Armenians, after the 'Go in peace' has been pronounced by the priest, 'while the clerks sing the psalm (xxxiv.), the Neschkar (= Eulogia) is distributed, thus forming another link with the older Agape' (Brightman, p. 457).

A rather interesting fact is that there are still in the English Church at least two relics of the Agape. The first is the offertory of alms for the poor taken on the occasion of Holy Communion. There is no apostolic precedent for the act, except that at first, when the Agape was joined to the

[1] Conybeare, *Prayers for Animal Sacrifices: Rituale Armenorum*, pp. 413, 414.

[2] Dowling, *Sketches of Georgian Church History*, pp. 123, 124.

Eucharist, a collection was made for the poor of the church. This collection was in both money and kind. When the Eucharist eventually separated from the Agape, it took over the usage of receiving the gifts of the faithful. At first these seem to have consisted only of bread and wine. The loaves and the *ampullae* or phials were received by the priest or deacon, and what was needful for the sacrament was kept and the rest distributed to the poor. It is easy to see how out of this custom there arose the habit of having an offertory at Holy Communion for the sake of the poor.[1]

The celebrations on Maundy Thursday are usually regarded as another relic of the Agape. They chiefly centre nowadays in the quaint service in Westminster Abbey when gifts from the King are presented to old men and women, each sex being represented to the number of years in the Sovereign's age. The gifts are of money, and are in two portions —the first representing clothes that used to be distributed, and the second portion representing food money. In olden days the observances of Maundy Thursday included the Pedilavium, in which the Sovereign washed the feet of the poor. This practice has long been discontinued in the English

[1] See article on 'Love-feasts' in *Dictionary of Bible*, and for the history of this portion of the Holy Communion service see Procter and Frere, pp. 479–482.

Church, though, after the Sovereign himself ceased to perform the ceremony, it was continued for a time by the Lord High Almoner. It is on record that Queen Elizabeth conformed with the practice, and that the last King of England to carry out the oblation was James II. It is only in a very indirect way, however, that the Maundy celebrations are linked up with the Agape.

XVIII

MODERN READOPTIONS OF THE AGAPE

We have seen in the previous chapters that while the Agape died out in Western Christendom and in the greater part of the Eastern Church, there were, nevertheless, byways of the East where the Love-feast was still valued and celebrated, sometimes in strange forms. Specially was this true as regards Bohemia and Bulgaria. The Paulicians and other 'Protestant' missionaries carried with them from the Eastern Church what they believed to be its apostolic features. Some of the earliest of these missionaries were the two Greek Bishops Cyril and Methodius (died 885), who extended their work even as far as Moravia. Little by little the whole central portion of these Slav provinces became Christian after the manner of the Greek reformers who had brought them the gospel. It was not long,

however, before the Roman See, eager for territorial extension of the Church, cast its eyes on Bohemia. In 940 the Emperor Otho subdued the Bohemians, and commanded their princes to introduce the Roman liturgy in the Latin tongue. The Bohemian Church stoutly opposed the change, even when later (968) a bishopric was formed at Prague for Bohemia. Several strong efforts were made by the Roman authorities to persuade the Bohemians to accept the doctrines of the celibacy of the clergy and the withholding of the cup in the Eucharist. The Bohemians, however, refused persistently, asserting their sympathy and connexion with the Eastern rather than with the Western Church, and at last won for themselves (977) the permission to keep in use the Slavonic liturgy and their own ancient customs.

Even when Pope Gregory VII tried, in 1079, to expel the common language from the Church of Bohemia his efforts were only partially successful, and the two liturgies, Roman and Slavonic, continued in use up to the end of the fourteenth century.

The inner history of the Bohemian Church during these centuries is in considerable darkness. We know the political condition and the controversial disputes in which the churches were embroiled, but on many matters concerning church usages the information is very slender. We are

quite sure, however, that the links with Eastern Christendom that had been forged in the eighth and ninth centuries were not severed, and the Bible Christianity with which they began continued to abide. For instance, celibacy of the clergy was not accepted for several centuries, the cup was administered to the laity, and the service was read in the common tongue.

Though the historical material is very scanty, it is strange that there is still indirect evidence from these silent centuries that the Bohemians retained their Agape. The Bohemian chronicler, Cosmas of Prague, declares that the Christian prince Bretislav II by an edict in 1092 suppressed,

> 'Sepulturas quae fiebant in silvis et campis atque coenas (v.l. scenas) quas ex gentili ritu faciebant in biviis et in triviis quasi ob animarum pausationem.' ('The burials which they used to conduct in woods and fields, and the feasts (or tableaux) which they used to celebrate according to heathen usages at cross-roads or public squares as if for the rest of the souls of the dead.'[1])

Of course, from time to time there was need for revival, when tendencies to turn over to the easier ways of the Roman Church showed themselves. But each revival began with a desire to get back

[1] See *E.R.E.*, i., 466.

to old standards. That was the secret of the efforts of John Hus and Jerome of Prague. The Eastern influences on John Hus were not great; his eyes turned more to the English reformers; but Jerome of Prague was more in sympathy with the Greek forms of church life than with the Western. The great principle of the Hussite movement was that whatever in government, doctrine, and worship could not be proved from Scripture should be implicitly rejected. For many years theological and national disputes waged around the movement in Bohemia. Out of these struggles there came, in or about 1457, a separate body known as the Unitas Fratrum (the League of Brethren). Like all such movements it had quite a collection of nicknames. They were called Jamnici (cave-dwellers), Pionicnici (beerhouse men), and Pickards. They believed the Roman Church to be hopelessly corrupt, and they made earnest efforts to get back to the scriptural idea of the Church. They obtained permission to organize a community in the village of Kunwald, near Senftenberg. It quickly increased till it had several thousands of members, of whom the parish priest Michael was one. Their tenets were rather vague. They were partially communistic, and abolished all distinctions of rank and fortune. They adopted the Pedilavium from Scripture as part of the Eucharist. They also refused to take

oaths or to render military service, and they adopted the use of the lot for elections and sometimes for marriage. In their attempt to get back to primitive usages they met daily and partook of a common evening meal, which must have been an Agape. The Governor, Von Podiebrad, arrested Gregory, and had him tried on the charges that he did not believe in the Real Presence, and that 'he had partaken of bread and wine at their nocturnal meetings, as of common food.' After a little time Gregory was set free, and fled to the mountains, where he formed a new association on the same lines as before.

It is possible that this evening meal may not have been the reintroduction of the Agape as a piece of primitive usage. These nocturnal gatherings may have been simply evening communions in which a certain laxity of administration had a place. Nevertheless, in process of time they were sure to find that while their ceremony had ceased in the true sense to be a sacrament, it was none the less apostolic as being an Agape.

The priests of the Roman Church naturally refused to administer the communion to the Moravians, who set about getting a priesthood for themselves. They chose a bishop by lot, and got ordination for him, and for several priests, through the agency of the Waldensian Church and through

the ex-priest Michael. Henceforth they formed a separate Church, whose chief aim was to fulfil the primitive usages of the Christian Church. They instituted a code of the strictest morality; they had a celibate priesthood; they disdained all luxuries; they practised public confessions of sins; they appointed a committee of elderly women who watched with relentless severity over their sisters' conduct and morals.

When the Smalkald War broke out, the Bohemian colonies suffered very severely, and finally were broken up. Many of them took refuge in Poland and in Hungary, where they formed little sects, some of which persist to the present.

In spite of a brave struggle to maintain a standing, little by little the Unitas Fratrum broke up. Johann of Comma, generally known as Comenius, got a considerable amount of money from England, with the help of Oliver Cromwell, for the poor brethren (1658–9). For over sixty years nothing is heard of the Unitas Fratrum, though a small and faithful remnant remained.

In the year 1722 Pastor Rothe, of Berthelsdorf, introduced to the Count of Lusatia, from whom he held his living, a Moravian carpenter, Christian David. This man had been deputed by his brethren to look out for a concession of land where they could live and freely practise their religion. In the estate

of Berthelsdorf a kind of Christian settlement had been planted by Count Zinzendorf, one of the nobility of Dresden (born in 1700). The Count was a man of almost pietistic temperament. He was eager for fellowship with Christian people, and he bought the estate that he might offer a refuge to needy Christians, and especially to those who were in any way persecuted or oppressed. He persuaded the distinguished but eccentric preacher Pastor Rothe to accept pastoral charge of his prospective colony. He himself was ordained deacon. Just at this time Christian David came on the scene. It seemed almost a providential coincidence. Zinzendorf had prepared a colony, and Christian David was seeking a place for his scattered and persecuted co-religionists. In a few months five families were settled on the estate, and the first houses of the future town of Herrnhut ('The Lord's Watch') were built. In the course of five years the number of emigrants increased to five hundred. Disputes arose, the outcome of which was that the whole colony decided to readopt the organization and usages of the Unitas Fratrum, from whom they were in spiritual lineage. In pursuance of that object, 'bands' for Christian Fellowship were established. The membership was divided into 'choirs,' according to age, sex, and civil status, each of which had its own meetings for edification. The two most interesting usages,

however, adopted in Herrnhut were the Pedilavium[1] and the Agape. For both they found their pattern in the actions and words of the Lord, and to a less extent (for it is difficult to trace the spring from which ideas flow) from the usages of the Unitas Fratrum.

Ancient usages were followed in the Agape. The Moravian bishop or other minister presided, and along with him sat at the head of the hall or church several deacons and elders. The women sat on one side of the church and the men on the other side. Tables were arranged near the door, and on these various foods were placed. Small German rolls and tea were the usual provisions distributed. Psalms and hymns were sung, and an exhortation was addressed to the assembly. The psalms used were not biblical, but rather of the nature of devotional canticles. There does not seem to have been any collection. The meeting was open for 'experiences' and prayers, and in some cases for public confessions.[2]

[1] See John xiii. 14, 15. The washing of feet was with the Moravians a preliminary to every celebration of the Holy Communion up to the year 1818.

[2] The following description of a Moravian Agape at Herrnhut is taken from the *Methodist Recorder* of September 4, 1913:

'The Love-feast began at 4.30. The spacious hall was almost filled with Herrnhuters, the men sitting on one side, and the women on the other—a custom which Wesley and the early Methodists apparently borrowed from the Moravians. There was an extempore prayer at the beginning of the service, and later on huge trays were brought round, containing currant buns and cups of tea—the latter

Part of the importance of the Moravian readoption of the Agape is due to the fact that as a consequence of the Moravian usage there arose the only modern Love-feast of any great extent, namely, that in use in the Methodist Churches.[1]

In the year 1735 John Wesley started for Georgia as a missionary. Amongst the passengers on board

very weak and very sweet—of which every one partook. All the rest was singing. There were no testimonies or addresses, but some twenty hymns or sections of hymns were sung, slowly, and with scarcely an interval between. The astonishing familiarity of the brethren with their hymns was in evidence.'

From the same article the following account of a communion service at Herrnhut is taken. With the Moravians the Lord's Supper is celebrated once a month on the Sunday evening:

'The brethren and sisters were quietly filing in, and taking their seats, the men on the one side, all dressed in black, the women on the other, all in white shawls and white caps, with ribbons of different colours, according to their state of life—pink for single sisters, blue for married sisters, and white for widows. The service was conducted by six ministers in ample white gowns. Here, again, all the service consisted of singing, with the exception of a prayer at the beginning, and the words of consecration. Two of the ministers passed along a row of communicants, who rose as they approached. One held a basket of wafers, from which the other took one, and, breaking it, administered it to the persons before him. The wine, however, was poured out and administered to the person at the end of the line, and then the chalice was passed from hand to hand until it returned to the minister. The most singular detail in the service was the giving of the hand of fellowship. After the reception of the elements, in either kind, each communicant turned to his neighbour, and solemnly shook hands with him. Except during the actual consecration and administration, the singing of appropriate hymns was continuous.'

[1] In view of the argument used in the preceding pages, I might have placed the Moravian and Methodist Agapae among the 'Survivals in Modern Times of the Agape,' had it not been for a communication from Dr. Müller, the Keeper of the Archives at Herrnhut. He says, 'Bei

the ship was a little group of Moravians, whose religion greatly impressed Wesley. When he landed he got in touch with the Moravian settlers, and being present at their meetings made him forget (he tells us) the seventeen centuries that had fled, and imagine himself in one of those assemblies where Paul the tentmaker or Peter the fisherman presided. When he returned to London in 1738 he became intimate with a young Moravian evangelist, Peter Böhler, who had much to do with helping him to his conversion. A few months afterwards Wesley went on a visit to Herrnhut, where he met Count Zinzendorf, and was much interested and impressed by the religious life of the settlement. In later years, when Wesley was organizing the fruits of his own evangelical labours and establishing the work of Methodism on a firm basis, he adopted several features from Moravianism, specially the Moravian common meal evolved into the Methodist Love-feast.

der alten Unitas Fratrum ist das Liebesmahl sichter *nicht* im Gebrauch gewesen, denn es findet sich keine Spur davon. Das erste mal ist es in Herrnhut am 13 August, 1727, gefeiert worden. Am Vormittag dieses Tages hatte die Herrnhuter Gemeine zusammen das Abendmahl gefeiert. Nach demselben wollte eine grössere Gesellschaft noch bei einender bleiben, um sich mit einander auszusprechen. Damit sie ungestörter beisammen bleiben könnten, schickte ihnen Zinzendorf etwas Essen aus seiner Küche, was sie dann gemeinschaftlich genossen. Seitdem wurden derartige Liebesmahle öfters abgehalten, die aber in der äussern Form sehr verschieden waren.'

In a long letter written in the year 1748 to the Vicar of Shoreham, and published under the title of *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, Mr. Wesley has left a clear statement on record as to the introduction of the Agape into the Methodist Church. After describing how he divided the members of Society into 'bands' for the purposes of Christian fellowship, he proceeds:

'In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all His mercies, I desired that one evening in a quarter all the men in a band, on a second, all the women, would meet; and on a third, both men and women together; that we might together "eat bread" as the ancient Christians did, "with gladness and singleness of heart." At these Love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name as well as the thing which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water; but we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with "the meat which perisheth," but with "that which endureth to everlasting life."'

An entry in his Journal on New Year's Day, 1739, is the first reference to these gatherings:

'Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and my brother Charles were present at our Love-feast in Fetter Lane, with about sixty

of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord."'

An interesting point concerning this gathering is that seven clergymen of the Church of England were present.

For many years afterwards Wesley conducted Love-feasts, of which notes are found in his Journal and Diaries, mostly all having the information as to whether they were for men or for women. His habit seems to have been to have one for each sex once every month. Twenty-one years after this meeting in Fetter Lane Wesley makes the following reference in his Journal, under the date December 9, 1759: 'I had for the first time a Love-feast for the whole Society.'

It was not very long, however, before Wesley found himself compelled to sever the Methodist movement completely from the Moravian. When the moment of decision came he cut it adrift, as he affirmed, from 'stillness' on the one hand,

and from what he regarded as unscriptural predestinarianism on the other.[1]

The Methodist Love-feast is generally held four times a year, at the close of either the morning or evening service on a Sunday. The minister always presides. Formerly admission to the Love-feast was by the quarterly ticket of membership, but this custom has fallen into abeyance. The meeting opens with singing, there being a small section of hymns written by Charles Wesley for this purpose, the best known of which are 'Come and let us sweetly join'[2] and 'Saviour of all, to Thee we bow.' Bread and water are handed round by the stewards of the poor or other officials, a verse of thanksgiving for food is sung, and a collection for the poor of the congregation is made. The main part of the service, which usually lasts from three-quarters of an hour and upwards, is then taken up with testimony, prayer, and singing. Frequently the minister takes an opportunity of giving a short summary of the spiritual progress of the church, referring to deaths and other changes in membership, and to conversions and pastoral matters. The meeting concludes simply with singing and prayer.

[1] See *Journal*, Standard Ed., vol. ii., p. 309.

[2] This hymn was well known even as early as 1740. Two of its lines were inserted by Hogarth in one of his caricatures.

NOTE.—For the material used in this section I am indebted to the following sources :

Count von Lützow : *Life of John Hus.*
Dr. Schweinitz : Art. ' Moravians,' in M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia.*
Bovet : *Life of Zinzendorf*, 1860.
Art. ' Unitas Fratrum,' in *Catholic Cyclopaedia.*
Art. ' Hussites,' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*
J. E. Hutton : *History of the Moravian Church.*
Journal of John Wesley, Standard Edition.

And especially to the courtesy of Dr. Müller, the Keeper of the Archives at Herrnhut, for answering several questions.

In order to complete the tale of readopted Agapae, so far as possible, mention should be made of the sect of the Glasites or Sandemanians which had vogue in Scotland and in America for about a century and a half. A Scotch Presbyterian minister named John Glas (1695–1773) disagreed with the Shorter Catechism on some points, and was deposed in consequence from his ministerial office. He founded a sort of Congregational Church, and his followers were known as Glasites. His chief colleague was Robert Sandeman, who became his son-in-law, and was eventually recognized as the head of the sect. In America the followers were generally called

Sandemanians. In 1730 a church was set up in Dundee, and, later, churches were founded in Paisley, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Montrose, Liverpool, London, and other centres. A prominent member and elder of the London church was the famous scientist Michael Faraday. Many features of church use were introduced by Glas. The 'osculum pacis' (the kiss of peace) and the Agape were important features of the worship. The Love-feast was celebrated as a common meal with Scotch broth, and from this custom the congregation was humorously known as the Kail Kirk. At one time, too, the Pedilavium was practised, and the members were strictly enjoined to follow the dictum of the Council of Jerusalem, and abstain from things strangled and from blood. Following the apostolical precedent, the lot was brought into use in the Church. For some years past the Church has been practically extinct in the United Kingdom, being merged in Congregationalism.[1]

Some of the pietistic sects which sprang up in Germany in the early part of the eighteenth century took on features similar to that of the Moravian Church, and the corresponding 'colonies' of Germans in the United States retained the same features. For instance, on the banks of the Iowa River there is a communistic colony of about two thousand

[1] See *Encyc. Brit.*, 'Thomas Glas' and 'Glasites.'

German Christians who call themselves the Amana Society, or the Society of True Inspiration. This Society traces its origin to the year 1714, and to the writings of two pietists, Gruber and Rock. There are three important and solemn religious ceremonies observed by these people, each of which is found in either Methodism or Moravianism, or both. These are the Renewing of the Covenant (*Bundesschliessung*), the Spiritual Examination (*Unterredung*), and the Love-feast (*Liebesmahl*). It is interesting, too, to find that a special feature of the Love-feast as carried out by the Amana Society is the Pedilavium, or ceremony of foot-washing.[1]

A somewhat similar sect is the Tunkers or Dunkards (German, *Tunken*, to dip), a body of German Baptists founded in 1708 by Alexander Mack. Between 1719–29 the whole sect emigrated to the United States and settled in Pennsylvania, and is found to-day in several States. They hold a Communion Service which is preceded by an Agape in the evening. They observe the Kiss of Charity and also the Pedilavium.[2]

[1] *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. 'Amana Society,' vol. i.
[2] *Catholic Cyclopaedia*, 'Baptists' and 'Tunkers.'

INDEX

ABBOT, PROF. F. F., 22 n., 30 n.
Abyssinian Church and Agape, 130, 260
Achelis, H., 210 n.
Acts of James and Marianus, 91
Acts of Paul and Thecla, 81, 187, 213 sq.
Acts of Thomas, 90 sq.
Adeney, Prof., 113, 260–1
Adoptianism, 126
Agape :
  Abyssinia, in, 130, 260
  Alexandria, in, 93–5, 107 sq., 117, 226
  Armenia, in, 130
  Britain, in, 140
  Africa, in, 93–111
  Asia, in, 67–81
  Cappadocia, in, 122 sq.
  Church Orders, 195–212
  Connexion with Collegia, 31–34
  Corinth, in, 82 sq.
  Cemeteries, in, 133
  Decay of, 246–256
  Dedication of Churches, 140
  Europe, in, 82–92
  France, Traces of, in, 144
  Gaul and Spain, 141–6
  Menu at, 213 sq.
  Methodist, 276–280
  Moravian, 268–275
  Milan, at, 184, 215
  Name and its Origin, chap' iv., 59 sqq.
  Paphlagonia, in, 123
  Parallels (Pagan), chap. i.
  Parallels (Jewish), chap. ii.
  Prison, in, 90
  Readoptions, Modern, of, chap. xviii., 268
  Relation to Eucharist (see EUCHARIST)
  Saturday, on, 90, 118
  Slavery and, 247
  Tables, 176 sqq.
  Time of Meeting, 218
Agapae Connubiales, 192
Agapae Funerales, chap. xii.
ἀγάπη, note on the word, 55, 63 n.
Agapetae, 139
Agnes, St., Catacomb of, 168 sq.
Albigenses, 129
Alethius, 137
Alexandrian Catacombs, 171

Algerian Remains of Agape, 176–7
Allen, Dr., 227 sq.
Amana Society, 283
Ambrose, St., 132, 184
Ampullae of Agape, 179, 266
Ἀνδρεῖαι, 18
Antidoron, 261
Apostolic Church Order, 196 sqq.
Apostolic Constitutions, 161, 183, 197 sq.
Apuleius, 21, 153 n.
Arabic Didascalia, 197 sq.
Arca, treasure-chest, 163, 216
Arendzen, Dr., 196 n.
Arles, Synod of, 141
Armenian *Canons of Basil*, 127
Armenian Church, 127
Armenian Liturgy, 265
Athanasius, 135 sq.
Athens, 18
Augustales, 153
Augustine, 193
Augustine, St., 124, 132 n., 177, 184, 214, 251
Augustus, 150
Aurelius of Carthage, 123, 133, 182

Barnabas, Epistle of, 85
Bartlet, Dr. J. Vernon, 73 n.
Basil, St., 122, 190
  Canons of, 127, 197–8
Batiffol, 13, 53, 73, 80, 102
Bernard, Archbishop, 211
Bigg, Dr., 56–7, 226 sq.
Bishop at Agape, 203
Bithynia (see PLINY)
Bogomils, 129
Bohemian Church, 128, 269 sq (see MORAVIA)
Böhler, Peter, 277
Box, G. H., 42 n., 73, 234
Bread of Exorcism, 183, 202, 242
Breaking of Bread, 45, 50, 64, 238 sqq.
Bretislav II, 270
Bulgaria, 128

CAECILIUS, 109
  Natalis, 86
Caligula and Collegia, 154
Callixtus, St., Catacomb of, 168–9
Canons of Hippolytus (see HIPPOLYTUS)
Carpocrates, 96
Carthage, Agape at, 96–107, 109, 170
  Third Council of, 123
Cassianus, 144
Cassian, John, 141
Catacombs, chap. xi., 165 sqq., 247
Catechumens and Agape, 136, 203, 208, 245
Catiline Conspiracy, 248
Celsus, 108 sq., 153
Centenarii, Guild of, 26
Charistia, 30 n.
Charity in Agape, 135, 249 (see CHAP I.)
Chateaubriand, 145

Chrysostom, St., 13, 16, 113–117, 190, 233
Cicero, 31 n.
Claudius Caesar, 155
Clement of Alexandria, 84 n., 93–97, 226 sq.
Clement of Rome, 85, 248
Coena Domini (see MAUNDY THURSDAY)
Collegia, 20 sqq.
  Christian, get corporate rights, 157, 163, 176
  Funeratica, 189 and chap. xii.
  in Houses, 158
  Laws relating to, 109, 147–164
  Tenuiorum, 33, 162
  various (see CHAP. X.)
'Come and Dine' frescoes, 169, 175
Combefisius, 131 n.
Comenius, 273
Communism of Christians, 160
Constantine Copronicus, 129
Conybeare, F. C., 37 n., 39, 125, 265
Cooper and Maclean (see 'TESTAMENT OF OUR LORD')
Corbona, 216
Corinth, 82 sq.
Cosmas of Prague, 270
Council of Carthage, 123
  of Orleans, Second, 124, 140
  Trullan, 124
  of Gangra, 122
  of Laodicea, 123
Crete, 18
Cubicula, 221
Cultores Augusti, 153
Cumont, Prof., 259 n.
Cyril, 268
Cyprian, St., 109 sq., 182, 188, 216, 248

DAVID, CHRISTIAN, 273
Deacons, 48 sq.
Dedication Agapae, 193
Demosthenes, 17
De Quincey, 35
Didache, 47, 68 n., 195, 196 sqq., 213, 230
Didascalia, 85, 196 sqq.
  Arabic, 197 sq.
Dill, Sir S., 32 n.
Diognetus, Epistle to, 89
Dionysiac Customs, 192
δοχή, 79, 200
Domitilla, Catacomb of, 169
Druidism in Gaul, 145
Duchesne, 144 n., 201 sqq.
Dunkards, 283

EDERSHEIM, 37 n., 41
Egyptian Agapae, 210
Egyptian Church Order, 197 sq.
Egyptian Cults at Rome, 154
εἰρήνη, 61, 172–3
Encratites, 228
English Church, Relics of Agape in, 265 sq.
ἐράνοι, 17
Ermoni, 13, 54, 70 n., 73
Essenes, 35 sq.
ἑταιρείαι, 18, 74, 148, 158

Ethiopic Church Order, 197 sqq.
Eucharist and Agape Connected and Separated, 45, 47, 51, 56, 68 sq., 79–80, 102, 106, 109–111, 115–118, 131, 171, 188, 210, 224, 234
εὐχαριστεῖν, 72
Eulogia, 145, 208
Europe, Agape in, 82 sqq.
Euthymius, 129
Eusebius, 37 n., 39, 95, 143
of Alexandria, 118
Eustathian Heretics, 122
Exorcism, Bread of, 183, 243

Fanum Fortunae, Stele at, 175 sq.
Faustum Contra, 134
Fellowship, 45
Findlay, Dr., 53
Fines at Guild Feasts, 24
Fish at Agape, 214
Foucart, 19 n.
Fractio Panis Frescoes, 167–9, 175
Fronto of Cirta, 87
Funeral Agapae, 177, 205, 263 (see Chap. XII.)
in Russia, 262
Funeral Loaves, 264
Funk, 199 n., 201 n.

Gallican Mass, 144
Gangra, Council of, 122
Gaul, Agape in, 141 sq.
Gayet's Discoveries, 192
Georgian Church, 130, 265
Gibbon, 125
Gibson, Mrs., 199 n.
Glasites, 281
Gregory the Great, 140, 193 sq.
Gregory VII, 269
Gregory of Nazianzus, 122, 189 sq., 192
Gregory of Nyssa, 122
Gregory of Tours, 143 sq.
Gsell, and Algerian Remains, 178 sq.
Guilds at Lanuvium, 27
Military, 25 sq.
Ragdealers, 23, 27–8
Trade, 11 sqq.
in Roman Law, chap. x., 147
Similarities with Agape, 19–20

Hadrian, 162
Hardy, E. G., 159, 164
Hatch, E., 20
Harnack, A., 77
Harnack, Th., 46, 75 n.
Hauler, 197 n., 205 n.
Herrnhut, 274
Hilary of Poictiers, 141
Hippo, Agape at, 187
Hippolytus, 37 sq., 189
Hippolytus, Canons of, 16, 85, 183, 197 sq., 225, 231, 241 sqq.
Constitutions through, 197
Honey at Agape, 214
Horace, 21
Hort, 45
Hus, John, 271

Idol Meat, 157
Ignatius, 77, &c.
Illicita Collegia, 152, 159
Insurance by Guilds, 25–8, 83
Irenaeus, 141
Isaac the Armenian, 130
Isis Worship in Rome, 153

Jerome, St., 138 sq., 252
of Prague, 271
Jews and Roman Collegia, 151 sq.
Josephus, 36 sq., 151
Julian (Emperor), Letters, 120
Jülicher, 14
Julius Caesar, 150, 253
Justin Martyr, 80, 89
Juvenal, 100

Kail Kirk, 282
Keating, Dr., 19, 73, 75 n., 80 n., 108, 110, 209, 223 sq., 228
Kiddūsh, 42 sq.
Kiss of Peace, 144, 238, 282
Kizil Bash, 259 n.
κλάσις, 50
κοινωνία, 45 sqq.
Koran and Agape, 259 n.
Korban (see Corbona)

Ladeuze, 71
Lambert, J. C., 234 n.
Laodicea, Council of, 123
Last Supper, 60
Laymen at Agape, 204 sqq., 243, 245 sq.
Lecky, Prof., 214 n., 249
Leclercq, 72, 165 n.
Leucian Acts of John, 188
Liebarth, 83
Lightfoot, Bp., 14, 35–76, 77–79, 89, 90 n., 119 n., 142–144
Lights in Agape, 103, 202, 239
Lindsay, 260 n.
Liturgy of the Agape, chap. xv., 235
Lock, 16
Lucian, 89 sq., 153

Maclean, 33, 73, 196
Malabar Christians, 257 sq.
Marcian's *Digest*, 151
Marcus Aurelius, 162
Maronite Agape, 259
Marucci, 165 n.
Martyrs, Feasts of, 182
Matal, 127
Materials of Agape, 213 sq.
Maundy Thursday, 124, 207, 266
at Jerusalem, 211
Meals, Jewish Common, 39 sqq.
Mellitus, 193
Menu at Guild Feasts, 23
Methodist Agape, 277 sqq.
Methodius, 268
Michael, Priest, 271
Milan, Agape at, 184, 215
Mill, James, 250
Minucius, Felix, 86 sq., 160
Mixed Chalice, 224
Monasticism and the Agape, 254
Money at Agape, How expended, 216 sq.

Moravia, 128
Moravian Agape, 272 sqq.
Morning Communion, 224
Moulton and Milligan (*Vocab. Greek Testament*), 63 n.
Müller, Dr., 276 n.
Music at Agape, 95, 105, 219

Name of Agape, 172
Nero, 155
Nestorians, 130
Neschkar, 265
Nicaean Gnomes, 197
Nicomedia, Firemen of, 148
Numa Pompilius, 22

Oblations, 217
Offerings, 86, 120
Offertory in Communion, 265 sq.
Otho, Emperor, 269
Orationale (Tommasius), 211
Origen, 107–9, 189
Orleans, Council of, 124, 140
Ovid, 29 n., 30 n., 181 n.

Pain bénit, 145, 262
Pammachius, 138
Papyri, 63 n., 157
Pardons, Breton, 145
Parentalia, 23, 181 sq.
Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas, 105–6
Patrick, Prof., 109 n.
Patrons (Divine) of Guilds, 29
Paul, St., and Agape, 51 sqq., 85
Paulicians, 125–130, 268
Paulinus of Nola, 137 sq., 141, 170, 191
Pedilavium, 237 sq., 266, 271, 283
Peregrinus, 89 sq.
Peter, St., and Marcellinus, Catacomb of, 168
φιδίτια, 18
Philippopolis, 128
Philo, 36–7, 39
Pionus, Acts of, 90
Place of Agape, 220–1
Plato, 19
Pliny the Elder, 36
Pliny the Younger, 18, 74, 148 sqq., 153 n., 158, 217 sq., 222
Plumptre, Dr., 49
Polycarp, Festival of, 143 sq.
Life of, 119 sq.
Poppaea, 155
Possidius, 123 n.
Praetextatus, Catacomb of, 173
Priscilla, St., Catacomb of, 167
Prison Agape, 90, 105
προσφόρα, 118 n., 217
Pultes at Agape, 184

Questions asked at Agape, 238

Rainy, Dr., 98
Ramsay, Sir Wm. M., 83, 149
Rhodes, 18
Riedel, 260 n.
Riom, 143
Ritual and Agape, 255

Romanoff, 262
Rothe, Pastor, 273
Russian Orthodox Church, 261

Sacramentum, 75
Sandemanians, 281
Saragossa, Synod of, 141
St. Sebastian's, Rome, 150
'Sealed Bread,' 136
Seniores Probati, 240
Seven. Number in Catacomb Frescoes, 169
Shepherd of Hermas, 85
Sholae in Catacombs, 174, 221
Sibylline Oracles, 91 sq.
Silvia, St., Pilgrimage of, 197 sq.
Slanders against Love-feasts, 75, 86 sq., 101, 103–4, 107–8, 134, 251
Slaves Emancipated, 248
Social Aspects of Agape, 246 sq.
Socrates, 19, 52
Socrates (Historian), 117
Sodalicia, 20
Sodalitates, 158
Sozomen, 118
Spain, Agape in, 141
Sparta, 18
Spence-Jones, Dr., 166 n.
Spitta, 14
Suetonius, 31 n., 150
Suidas, 83
Sulpicius Severus, 141–2
συσσίτια, 18
'Symbiotes,' 149
'Symmystai,' 149
Syncretism, 32
Synod of Hippo, 124

TACITUS, 180 n.
Talmud, 41
Tertullian, 50, 96–107, 142, 155, 162, 188, 218–222, 225, 232, 239 sqq., 254
Testament of Our Lord, 197 sqq.
Theodoret, 191
Therapeutae, 39 sqq.
Θιάσοι, 18, 153
Thomas, St., 257
Tiberias, Lake of, 61 sqq., 65–6, 172
Tiberius Caesar, 154
Time of Agape, 217 sq.
Trades Unions, 22
Trajan Emperor, 148 sqq.
Trullan Council, 124, 198, 255
Tunkers (see DUNKARDS)

UHLHORN, 25, 256
Unitas Fratrum, 271 sqq.
Unsocial Character of Christians, 160–1

VALERIUS, MAXIMUS, 30 n.
Verona Latin Fragments, 197 sq.
Vienne and Lyons, Epistle of Churches of, 143
Vigils on Easter Saturday, 208
Virgil, 181 n.
Virginitate, De, 135

WAKES, 264
Waltzing, 22 n.
Washing of Hands, 103, 236, 238, 240
Wesley, John, 276
Whiston, 199 n.
Widows, Agape for, 104, 200 205 sq.,, 242
Wordsworth, Bp. John, 196 n., 198 n., 219

XENOPHON, 19

ZAHN, 78, 228 n.
Zephrynus, 189
Zinzendorf, 274 sq.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

2 Samuel iii. 32–35 180 n.
Psalm ii. 11 113
Jeremiah xvi. 7 .. 180 n.
Ezekiel xxiv. 16–17 180 n.
Hosea ix. 4 .. 180 n.
Matthew xxvi. 30 .. 237
Mark vii. 11 216
Luke xxiv. 30–35 .. 64
John vi. 168
xiii. 14–15 .. 275 n.
xxi. 1–24 60
Acts i. 4–6 .. 44 n.
ii. 42 44
Acts ii. 46 .. 47 n.
vi. 1–2 .. .. 45, 48
xviii. 2 155
xx. 7–11 .. 49 sq.
xx. 11 .. .. 16, 229
xx. 29 207
1 Corinthians v. 11 .. 186
vi. 9–11 186
xi. 18 .. .. 221 n.
xi. 18–34 .. 51 sq.
xi. 20–22 .. 20, 186
2 Peter ii. 13 56
Jude 12 .. .. 55 sqq.

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